

*Continued from the front cover*

genuine, durable unity and consolidation, greater than at any time when Nehru was at his peak, or such chronic disorder as to make recovery impossible and total collapse not only possible but certain.

Which way will she move? The author believes that the answer does not lie in economic indices, the arithmetic of the planners or riddles of the constitution, but in closer integration of the political system with the people in a democratic system. That alone can ensure legitimacy and order in public life. The key is hidden in parliamentary institutions and the party system, which reveal their direction only when the two decades of freedom in all their varied aspects are brought together into a single perspective. That, as the author's note explains, is the task attempted in *Uncertain India*.

# UNCERTAIN INDIA

*A Political Profile of Two Decades of Freedom*

PRAN CHOPRA



ASIA PUBLISHING HOUSE

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE SCHEME and contents of this book owe a debt of gratitude to conversations in recent years with a very large number of people in several countries, including India; these suggested the need for a book which would try to do several things at once:

In the first place, it should get away from the stereotype of Ancient India, which until a few years ago excessively dominated all writings about this country. India's earlier past is an important influence upon her future, but her recent past and the present have a formative power which is underestimated. Therefore the book should concern itself mostly with the years of independence and their immediate background.

Secondly, it should put these years in a single perspective in order to bring out the progression of events and the evolving inter-relationship between different aspects of development in India since she became independent. These developments can be divided into several different phases, but they also display a continuity which the book should trace. It should also explain how domestic political institutions have helped to shape the economy, or how foreign policy has guided domestic economics and politics and how in turn it has been guided by them. The bulk of recent writings on India is about individual aspects and largely intended for specialized audiences; relatively few books treat India comprehensively in her totality or try to make India comprehensible to the lay reader, especially overseas.

Thirdly, though covering India to the present day, it should especially survey the years of Nehru's dominance, more particularly the years of his greatest impact—from the early to the late 'fifties. It should assess, however tentatively, his contribution towards making India what she is and India's contribution to the making of Nehru.

The book should, in the fourth place, be a chronicle of selected events in addition to being a commentary thereon and an interpretation of the movement of events. Recollection of facts or events does not always, or not in all people, inform



strongly held opinions, prejudices or impressions about India ; in some the shortcoming is not of recollection but of knowledge. Therefore the latest newspaper headlines acquire a *significance* which is in excess of their merit ; the shortness of the perspective magnifies their size.

Finally, in addition to discussing the events and personalities with which India has become associated in the minds of most people, the book should trace the fate of those modern ideas, values and institutions which, though largely gifted to India by Nehru, were also contributed to his thinking by certain compulsions of the Indian situation.

Any book which tries to do all these things at the same time runs the risk of failing to do any of them well. This book is no exception, and some of its failings perhaps originate in this fact in addition to those contributed by the author's own limitations.

The theme that the book covers has been divided into five phases: the years immediately preceding India's independence and those—about five—which intervened before Nehru's emergence as the undisputed and unquestionable leader. These are the years in which events decided what kind of India would be inherited by Nehru and the contribution she would make to his personality.

Second, the years of his dominance until the decline began at the end of the 'fifties, the years of his maximum contribution to India in thought and action.

Third, the dark years, from the early 'sixties up to the death of Nehru which end in this book with an overall assessment of Nehru in terms of an assessment of India as he left her.

Fourth, the all 'too brief Shastri interlude, up to the end of the middle 'sixties, which saw the strange phenomenon of a small and shy man from whom little was expected raising the country to heights she had not attained under Nehru. The memory of Nehru quickly receded into the background though the discerning eye could see the strength of the ideas and institutions planted by him, and perhaps could see them more clearly than at any time when Nehru was alive.

The up and down, light and dark years since then, during which enough has happened to make India's future uncertain but not so much as yet as to make it abysmal from the fifth phase of the evolution of events in India's recent history. During

this phase, which has yet to run its course, Nehru's greatest gift to India, parliamentary democracy, is going through its toughest test; on how it passes this test the future of the country depends.

The narration and argument concerning these phases have been built around three distinguishable but inter-dependent themes: relations with other countries and more particularly non-alignment; the state of the economy and the performance of Nehru's brand of socialism; and the evolution of the polity, especially of democratic socialism, alongside the modernization of society.

The recurrence of these themes in different sections of the book may appear to be confusing and repetitious; in part it may be both, because of oversight or other faults and because the worst and the best things in India's recent history have often overlapped in point of time. But the confusion will be less if the book is read in the light of this scheme, which has been mapped out in further detail in a thematic index at the end of the book.

In the eighteen months or so it has taken to write the book, the pace of events has been so fast that despite revisions many parts will appear out-dated, perhaps even more than they are. Some chapters, not all, have been revised, a few of them more than once. But some have been allowed to stand as they were first written in order not to interrupt the argument. The conversions of money figures from Indian into U.S. currency, wherever made, have been allowed to retain the pre-devaluation rate. For this the reason is laziness.

My thanks are due to *The Statesman* for permission to quote from it, to *Shankar's Weekly* for permission to reproduce cartoons facing pages 37, 85 and 229, and to *The Times of India* for permission to reproduce Laxman's cartoons facing pages 260, 261, 386, 387 and between pages 226-227, 238-239 and 360-361.

November 1, 1967

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# UNCERTAIN INDIA

*A Political Profile of Two Decades of Freedom*

# "AN AGE ENDS"—IN CHAOS

## STARTING WITH DOOM

FROM the earliest days of British rule over India, the question has been raised whether an independent India can remain united, and to the present day it persists. Sir John Strachey, the historian, said in 1888: "There is not and never was an India, no Indian nation, no people of India" and a latter day historian, Sir Winston Churchill, said on the eve of India's independence and partition that "India will be subjected", under the scheme of independence, "not only to partition but to fragmentation and to haphazard fragmentation", for she was being handed over to "men of straw, of whom in a few years no trace will remain." Hearing of India "talked about as one entity", Stalin, like Churchill, also peeped into the future and found that "there can hardly be any doubt that in the case of a revolutionary upheaval in India, many hitherto unknown nationalities, each with its own language and its own distinctive culture, will emerge on the scene".

Stalin's prophecy was to inspire the Communist Party of India, on the very morrow of independence, to stage an upheaval with the utmost hope, but the Communists were not alone in being impressed by the linguistic incoherence of India. The oldest of the "elder statesmen" of India, C. Rajagopalachari, the first Indian to become Governor-General, wrote ten years after India had become independent—and surmounted more divisive pulls than are known to linguistics—that "as far as I can judge, the centrifugal forces will ultimately prevail". And the best known Indian scholar in linguistics, Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, gave his more expert warning in 1957, during the controversy over the official language of India, that the country "stands a risk of being split up into a number of totalitarian, small nationalities". As against this weight of authoritative judgment, those who did not see independent India as a contra-

diction in terms had only vague expectations on their side, and the determination to see India free *and* united; for their belief that India had always been united they drew on romanticised history, if not mythology, and almost on a mystical vision of India's cultural unity through diversity. Nehru, in equal parts visionary, historian and India's most determined nationalist, and Prime Minister for seventeen years, believed in "the tremendous and fundamental fact of India (which) is her essential unity throughout the ages", though he was realistic enough to know and frank enough to admit that "this past record of Indian cultural solidarity does not necessarily help us today".

It was against this background of the immensity of the danger of divisions and the frailness of hope that Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Azad and—much less known but at that time President of the Congress—Acharya Kripalani arrived at the fateful conjunction between India and independence at the head of the largest nationalist movement the world had known till then. Since the end of the war, it had been obvious that India's freedom was at hand but also the biggest threat India's unity had faced for a hundred years. Their task was to grasp one and avert the other.

In doing so the Congress had to cope with two confrontations, the external with the British, the internal with the Muslim League, linked with each other by the latter's demand for partition. In both efforts the Congress failed for a variety of reasons. Britain did not have the same attachment as the Congress to the concept of undivided India; in fact Congress leaders suspected that Britain was secretly promoting partition. In the second place, the Congress was fighting with wrong weapons, and on grounds of the enemy's choosing. For more than twenty years it had been a party of mass campaigns; repeatedly between the two wars, it had launched extensive agitations involving several hundred thousand people each time. This was the weapon it knew and yet abandoned once it got caught in the coil of negotiations. If the Congress had carried to the people, instead of only to the council chambers of the Muslim League, the straight issue that it would be better to wait for freedom a little longer than to hasten it by accepting partition, freedom might have been won without partition.

Acharya Kripalani was probably wrong when he alleged after independence that his colleagues shirked the tasks of another agitation because "the Congress leadership found the prospect of an immediate and peaceful transfer of power too tempting". Long before independence became an imminent possibility Muslim sentiment had been irretrievably captured by the League. But if in earlier years the Congress had spoken directly to the Muslim voters and with less impatience and more generosity, unity might have been won with independence. But at crucial moments negotiations became its main activity, after 1945 almost the sole activity, in triangular discussions in which only one party was at all anxious to preserve India's unity.

Down for discussion were successive British plans and their variations, all of them with the probability of partition written into them, each a further evolution of the proposal brought by Sir Stafford Cripps in March, 1942, that after the war an Indian Union would be formed and given Dominion Status, but any province which chose to stay out of the Union would be allowed to and would also be given a similar status. The basis of staying out was never stated to be religion, but that this would be the effect became an unstated assumption in all triangular discussions in the couple of years before independence came. Only a year earlier, a government was formed with the full support of the Congress in which half the members were Muslims, though the community formed only about one-third of the country's population. The Congress, though predominantly a Hindu body, included only two Hindus in its list of five members; of the other three, one was a Muslim, one a Christian and one a Parsi. But this was only an interlude which did not reverse the trend released jointly by a succession of British proposals and the unmistakably communal aspect of the Muslim League's demand for partition.

The seal of communalism was set on the trend with the Cabinet Mission's plan, drawn up by a team of three wise men, who were sent out by London in the summer of 1946. It was an intricate scheme, set out in three tiers, which aimed at pleasing everyone. There would be a Union Government, with the minimum powers, dealing only with Defence, External Affairs and Communications. The provinces would be grouped



into three: in the first, the Muslim majority provinces in the north-west (including the North-West Frontier Province where a government formed by the Congress was still in power); in the second, Bengal, a Muslim majority province, and Assam, which had a Hindu majority and a Congress government; and in the third all remaining Indian provinces. The Indian States, under their ruling Princes, would be left free to decide their own future. The Congress would thus get an undivided India, though with a weak Centre. The Muslim League would get the grouping of provinces it had wanted for its projected Pakistan; the groups would still be within the Indian Union, but each would have the right to draw up its own constitution, and sufficient regional autonomy to free it from the fear of domination by a Hindu-majority Centre; the Princes would have their freedom of choice. The Congress and the League came closer to agreement on the basis of this plan than they had on any other; Maulana Azad called the plan's acceptance by the Congress and the League "a glorious event in the history of the freedom movement". But later events were to prove his jubilation premature.

Even at the moment of acceptance there were differences of interpretation between the Congress and the Muslim League. Nehru declared publicly that the Centre's powers would be larger than under the Cabinet Mission's plan "whether Britain accepts it or not". For good measure he added, "We have now altogether stopped looking towards London". On the other hand the British Government declared that they would not force upon any unwilling part of the country "a constitution framed by an assembly in which a large section of the Indian population had not been represented". (The Muslim League had stayed out of the Constituent Assembly formed under the plan through indirect elections.) This tempted the Muslim League to think of no compromise: it fathered upon Nehru's statements its decision to withdraw its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's plan and to prepare instead for the final round in the battle for partition. In the next few months the League fought the Congress on three fronts and won on each: across the negotiating table, in the interim government and in the streets.

Darkest in itself and in its shadow over the future was the

battle in the streets. Descended from a chain of venomously interacting deeds which stretches so far back that it is hard to say whether the Hindus or the Muslims were the first to start it, the new battles marked the start of a new chain reaction for which the blame lies clearly on the Muslim League, though later the explosion was to burn as many Muslims as Hindus. On July 27, 1946, the Muslim League announced rejection of the Cabinet Mission's plan and utterly indefensibly, considering the inflammable times, announced that it would observe August 16 as Direct Action Day. In Bengal, where a Muslim League government was in power, and especially in Calcutta, the day marked the start of such a nightmare of carnage that *The Statesman*, using a phrase which stuck, called it the "Great Calcutta Killing". The famous newspaper, then British-owned, said "the origin of the appalling carnage and loss in the capital of a great province—we believe the worst communal riot in India's history—was a political demonstration by the Muslim League" (for which the League government had declared a public holiday in all offices).

"On all sides are death, misery and destruction. Houses have been destroyed with the men, women and children in them. Men have returned home in the evening to find neither wife nor children. The homeless are lying about, starving in the streets. The bloody shambles to which the country's largest city has been reduced is an abounding disgrace which, owing to the Bengal Ministry's eminence as a League Ministry, has inevitably tarnished seriously the reputation of the League itself." The *London Times* said of such demented politics: "What befell Calcutta as a result of the Muslim political demonstration on 'Direct Action Day' surpasses in magnitude anything previously witnessed in Indian history." Hindu retaliation followed and the endless trail of action and reaction spread from Calcutta to Noakhali, now in East Pakistan, where the Muslims retaliated, and thence to Bihar where the Hindus took bloody revenge and killed, according to one estimate, at least 7,000 Muslims. The point, however, is not the balance of this gory budget but that an all-consuming process had begun which destroyed the resolve of the Congress to preserve India's unity if this was its price.

Less bloody but in the end as decisive was the frustration

the Congress suffered in the interim government, consisting of both the Congress and the League, which had been formed under the Cabinet Mission's plan and continued under its successor, the Mountbatten plan, as a phase in the transfer of power from British to Indian hands. Nehru, as the most senior Indian member and virtually the Prime Minister, outlined policies and programmes; but the Government's proceedings were taken up with little else besides bitter wrangling and petty intrigues. Jinnah instructed League Ministers to oppose any government action of substance which prejudiced the League's goal of Pakistan. The Ministers over-fulfilled their target to such an extent—an outstanding example was Liaquat Ali's budget for 1947 which stole the socialist clothes of the Congress and imposed such a crippling burden upon the business community, which consisted mostly of Hindus, that it took some years to recover from the damage—that the government could take no action of any kind. The League succeeded in proving that a forced marriage with the Congress was unsustainable and partition the only alternative.

On the third front, negotiations, the plight of the Congress was still worse; it fought a long but unavailing battle to preserve the country's unity at least in some form, however attenuated; to preserve some kind of central government, however weak. In tentative approaches it offered startling concessions both to Britain and the Muslim League: to the former Nehru offered "an Anglo-Indian union involving nothing less than common citizenship", to the latter, Mahatma Gandhi offered that the League should be invited to form the entire interim government. Neither initiative appeared to lead anywhere and each lapsed.

The Congress also revived, in its manifesto for the 1945 elections, an offer Gandhi had made to Jinnah in September, 1944, that in the all-India federation, which would be lightly built, the Centre would only deal with External Affairs, Defence and Communications. The provinces would have full autonomy, and the Muslim majority provinces the right to join into a single province of their own—a clear anticipation of what the Cabinet Mission's plan was to offer to the League nearly two

later. In December, 1946, at the very start of the Constituent Assembly set up under the Cabinet Mission's plan, Nehru

offered to let the Indian states retain monarchical institutions. Next month the Congress Working Committee endorsed the right of the Sikhs, the Assamese and the Pathans (of NWFP) to decide their own relationship with the rest, though it did so in the expectation that even if they chose to stay out of the groups to which the Cabinet Mission had allotted them, they would not wish to step out of the Indian Union. In the following weeks the Congress indicated willingness to let Muslim majority areas have the right (hoping that, under a Congress-League agreement, they could be persuaded not to exercise it) to constitute themselves into separate, sovereign states, with the further right, even if they remained in the Indian Union, to have their own contacts with Britain, or even a treaty, provided that it was without military or political clames. About the same time, Lord Mountbatten, on his own, cast another despairing line for some form of unity. He discussed with his staff a proposal on April 25 that as two sovereign states, Hindustan and Pakistan should form a confederal centre on the basis of parity (the Cabinet Mission's plan had provided, by implication, for majority voting at the Centre).

None of this, however, was to be. The closest the two parties came to agreement and India to the prospect of undivided independence was in their abortive acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's plan. Maulana Azad and Jinnah blamed the demise of this acceptance upon Nehru and some of his public observations which did not accord with the plan. Up to a point they were probably right. But in an indirect retraction of Nehru's statement the Congress Working Committee passed a new resolution reconfirming its total acceptance of the plan. This should have left Jinnah in no doubt that if only he would agree India would become free on the basis of this plan; the Congress would do nothing, because it could not, to modify the plan in any way unilaterally. But Jinnah saw no reason why he should accept the plan again; instead he only declared once more that "The only solution for India's problems is Pakistan". He knew the dice was loaded in his favour; he had only to wait and fragments of India would fall into his lap as Pakistan. By now he had full power to offer or withhold the cooperation of the Muslim majority areas; and the British Government was determined that no constitution would be

imposed on an unwilling area. Even to a much less astute individual the logic of the situation should have been clear; in Jinnah's tactics it was the cutting edge of a sword; between it and the firm encouragement he received from the British in triangular negotiations, the Congress and India's unity were like ripe melons.

In an interview with Brecher in 1956, Nehru clearly held Britain guilty of encouraging the League and partition.<sup>1</sup> Even Maulana Azad, who took kindly to the British in the final years of negotiations, came to the conclusion by the middle of 1947 that the British Government's "surrender to the demands of the League was in my opinion due more to its anxiety to safeguard British interests than to its desire to please the Muslim League. A state dominated by the Muslim League would offer a permanent sphere of influence to the British. With a British base in Pakistan, India would have to pay far greater attention to British interests than she might otherwise do". The British role in the partition process was indirectly corroborated by Lord Mountbatten who told Brecher in 1956: "I think now, looking back, that partition could have been avoided if the British Government's policy had been different, about a year or eighteen months before."

The final phase began with a declaration by the British Government on February 20, 1947, of its firm intention to transfer power to Indian hands by a set date; the implication clearly was, and it was not lost upon Jinnah, that power would be transferred to a united India if possible, a divided one if necessary. Power would be transferred "on the due date, whether on the whole to some form of Central Government for British India, or in some areas to the existing provincial governments or in such other way as may seem most reasonable and in the best interest of the Indian people". Events moved so swiftly from that statement onwards that many things were said and done before their implications were fully digested.

For a start, to give one instance, Nehru's first reaction was over-exuberant: he described the statement as "wise and clear and definite... a challenge to all of us". Mahatma Gandhi who first saw what lay ahead. He

<sup>1</sup> See Brecher, *Nehru—A Political Biography*.  
<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

told Nehru: "This may lead to Pakistan for those provinces or portions which may want it. No one will be forced one way or the other." Even Calcutta seemed in danger of being lost to India. As a chronicler of the times, Alan Campbell-Johnson<sup>1</sup> records, Burrows, Governor of Bengal, was "standing out for the doctrine of a free city of Calcutta".

Mahatma Gandhi tried to put up a last ditch fight. At the end of March, 1947, he told Maulana Azad: "So long as I am alive I will never agree to the partition of India. Nor will I, if I can help it, allow the Congress to accept it." But the only form his resistance took, other than washing his hands of all future negotiations, was to advise Lord Mountbatten early in April to invite the Muslim League to have a cabinet of its choice. According to Maulana Azad, Lord Mountbatten was impressed, and he claims he was told by the Viceroy that such an offer could win the confidence of Jinnah. "But", the Maulana records, "this move could make no progress as both Jawaharlal and Sardar Patel opposed it vehemently." However, according to Campbell-Johnson even Lord Mountbatten was quite sceptical. There is nothing in any account of those times to suggest that there was any chance of averting partition after 1946. On the other hand there is much to confirm that the exasperation of the Congress with the experiment of living together with the League in the interim government had reached breaking point.

The idea of partition was not entirely foreign to the Congress. Rajagopalachari had been advocating it for some time as the "only way out". In 1942, four months before the fateful "Quit India" movement to compel the British to leave India, the Congress adopted a resolution which said it "cannot think in terms of compelling the people of any territorial unit to remain in an Indian union against their declared and established will". Just before Lord Mountbatten came to India the Congress passed another resolution, in the spring of 1947, that "the Constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly will apply only to those areas which accept it"—other areas obviously having the option to step out of the Indian Union—but "it must also be understood that any province or *part of a province*<sup>2</sup> which accepts the Constitution and desires to join

<sup>1</sup> Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*.

<sup>2</sup> Emphasis added.

the Union cannot be prevented from doing so"—a provision which became the basis for the partition of Punjab and Bengal.

But whether familiar with the notion of partition or not, the Congress was certainly unprepared for the consequences. These, however, belong to the next chapter, and to many of the chapters which follow belong the ideas which the Congress deeply imbibed from its experience of the last few months of British rule and the first few of independence: that the lopping off of any part of the country can shake the structure of the whole; that a strong centre is necessary even if the country is to be a federation; that the lines which divide communities are the sutures of the country which will not hold unless there is communal harmony and the government is secular; that the Muslims and Pakistan will always have a special place in British hearts and this will be a shadow on Indo-British relations despite the Englishness of Nehru, his personal relations with many eminent English men and women, and the great similarity between many values and institutions of England and the socialist and secular democracy which Nehru was going to try so hard to set up. From these months and those which immediately followed, India also imbibed another instructive experience: that you do not necessarily solve a problem by yielding to it. Patel believed, according to Azad, "If two brothers cannot stay together, they divide. After separation, with their respective shares they become friends. If on the other hand they are forced to stay together, they tend to fight everyday. It was better to have one clean fight and then separate than have bickerings everyday." The separation came and the daily bickering in the interim government ended; but the fight was not clean and it went on endlessly.

By deciding, however, to swallow the bitter pill of partition without further delay, the Congress did succeed in preventing Jinnah from extending his gains any further by his continued reluctance to commit himself. Definitions are limiting and Jinnah was persisting till the last in his reluctance to define Pakistan, using every opportunity in the meantime to extend its territorial scope. After the Congress had committed itself to the British plan, which would give Jinnah the two wings of Pakistan, to the east and west of India, Jinnah slipped in a demand for a corridor through India to link the two wings.

This enraged Nehru and distressed Mountbatten and Churchill. Nehru announced that if delays in the transfer of power even to a divided India continued, he would demand its transfer to undivided India. Mountbatten, as reported by Campbell-Johnson, told Jinnah at a mid-night meeting on June 2, 1947, that if he continued to hang back "the Congress Party and the Sikhs will refuse final acceptance (of the partition plan) at the meeting in the morning; chaos will follow and you will lose your Pakistan, probably for good." Jinnah's immediate reaction was only a cryptic "What must be, must be", but what probably swayed him later was a message which had come from Churchill two days earlier to warn him that he must regard acceptance of the plan as a matter of life and death.



## CHAPTER 2

### *DESPERATE REMEDIES*

IN AGREEING to Pakistan the Congress played a gamblers' hand. There was no assurance, and much reason to doubt, that the rest of India would now have unity and a strong centre. The spectre of fragmentation was now raised by parts of princely India, consisting of more than 500 states of varying size and importance, scattered all over and between them accounting for about two-fifths of the total area and one-fourth of the population of India.

To a lesser extent the threat also came from the country cousins of the Princes, the sizeable landlords with varying degrees of administrative powers over the revenue estates conferred upon them by the Indian Governments, British and pre-British, for various services rendered. A large number of these families were inter-connected by marriage, not only the princely families among each other but also the princely with those of the zamindars. But what united them more than marriages was a certain way of thinking (though there were some brilliant exceptions, both among the Princes and zamindars) of which the principal ingredients were an antipathy to the nationalist movement which was sweeping through the rest of India, a pronounced and generally obsequious loyalty to the British Crown and to its representatives in India, and highly conservative economic and, to a lesser extent, social values. Some of the Hindu Princes sufficiently approximated in their munificence and piety to the Hindu ideals of kingship for the romantic politician to identify them wholly with it; they were to become the inspiration a few years later for the revivalist strand in the politics of modern India. The states over which some of the bigger Princes presided were large and prosperous enough to have political significance, a sufficient base for incipient ambition.

By the time the Cabinet Mission came, relations between the states and British power had passed, broadly speaking, through

four different phases, the last most inimical to India's freedom and stability. In the first phase, which ended with the first decade of the nineteenth century, the British East India Company looked upon the major states both as rivals and as possible allies; upon some it waged wars of conquest, with others it concluded treaties of friendship and alliance; the treaty with one state provided that "accredited Ministers from each shall reside at the Court of the other".

The next phase began before the first had ended but was completed only about the middle of the nineteenth century. The ruling doctrine during this phase, partly the product of Britain's own ambitions, partly of the conflict with France for the control of India and her trade, was that "It is absolutely necessary for the defeat of (French) designs that no native state should be left to exist in India which is not upheld by the British power or the political conduct of which is not under its absolute control". With a slow grinding efficiency this doctrine was put into practice, and its fruits were gathered in 1857, when the forces of a number of major Indian states were used to quell what British historians call "the Mutiny" and Indian historians "the first war of independence" but was in fact no more than a disorganised uprising by a number of disjointed units of the broken up army of the last Mughal, which a few unconnected streams of antipathy towards a foreign power joined to help it look like the first stirrings of Indian nationalism. In any case, whatever its nature, it was quickly and totally suppressed. After the uprising Lord Canning wrote: "The Crown of England stands forth unquestioned ruler and paramount power in all India and is for the first time brought face to face with its feudatories. There is a reality in the suzerainty of England which is not only felt but eagerly acknowledged by the chiefs."

Their eager acknowledgment of a position of subservience, which constitutes the third phase, carried the Princes in uneventful subordination to the eve of the First World War; at that time the fourth and last phase began. The moving spirit of this phase was the realisation in Britain that in order to hold so distant and sizeable a territory as India, and to use it also as the fulcrum for Britain's imperial interests further afield, it was necessary to have its power firmly based in India itself; it

should not be obliged all the time to send out detachments of power across the seas from Britain. Two things resulted from this view of India. First an Indian army; second a drawing together of the Princes into institutions which were intended to be pillars of the British Empire in India.

The army was Indian in the sense that the ranks were mainly Indian, with a leavening of British troops; the officers (until well into the Second World War) were almost entirely British and the army's controls and purposes were exclusively of British manufacture. It was kept wholly free of all contaminating contact with the spirit of Indian politics; it became a clean and efficient fighting body of professional soldiers, but without anything like a head in which disturbances might arise. Secondly, Lord Hardinge began to draw the Princes together into a body of their own but strictly under British aegis and screened off from what was to become, after the first World War, the mainstream of Indian nationalism.

Half a century of cheerful acceptance of British Paramountcy had cleaned the mind of the princes of any political ambitions of their own or the taint of broader nationalism. At the same time, as dynastic overlords, they commanded immense loyalty among the people in the feudal societies over which they presided. The combination made them ideally suited to be one of main political supports of British power in India, and it naturally followed that a few disputes between some Princes and the Paramount Power notwithstanding, the meetings of the Chamber of Princes, founded in 1910, and their annual conferences before that, became the focal points of loyalty to Britain in India.

But in the middle thirties a more positive identity developed between the interests of Britain and the Princes; both saw themselves under threat of liquidation from the rising tide of nationalism. The Congress spread its activity into the states on the platform of the All-India States Peoples' Conference — Nehru was the main leader in it — and agitated for democratic rule. As the Conference drew strength from the Congress, the Princes drew it from Britain, and in its confrontation with the Congress and Indian nationalism, Britain looked to the Princes as allies. In other words, a century after he had formulated the thought, events vindicated what Sir John Malcolm said in 1825,

"I am decidedly of the opinion that the tranquillity, not to say security, of our vast Oriental possession is involved in the preservation of native principalities which are dependent on us for protection". In this, as in their other general relationships with India, the main zamindars or landlords were barely distinguishable from the Princes.

It was against this background that the Congress, appalled, received British proposals with regard to the future of the Princes in the event of power being transferred to Indian hands. The main point of all these proposals was the British Paramountcy would simply lapse, leaving the states free of all their treaty obligations towards Britain or the Government of British India. They would be free to join, on any terms they could negotiate, any successor government or governments that might be formed in India, or they would be free to proclaim their independence if they wished. Constructive forces were also at work, not least among them some informal advice to the states from many British sources, and the view of some of the Princes themselves that India should attain independence and her full status. But the situation was at least potentially hazardous.

V. P. Menon, at that time Constitutional Adviser to Lord Mountbatten and later Sardar Patel's principal executive in averting the tragedy that the lapse of Paramountcy might have become, described the British decision, about which he was never consulted, as "the greatest disservice the British had done us as well as (the states') rulers". Patel's reaction was the warning, reported by Menon, that the situation held "dangerous potentialities" and "if it was not handled promptly and effectively, our hard-earned freedom might disappear through the States' door". In other respects also the absurd appeared imminent. The Constitutional Adviser to the Constituent Assembly, Sir B. N. Rao, who later became one of the most distinguished men ever sent by India to the United Nations, remonstrated with Mountbatten. He pointed out that nearly half the 600 states had an average area of twenty square miles, an average population of 3,000, and an average annual revenue of Rs. 22,000 somewhat less than a competent workshop supervisor's. The effect of the lapse of Paramountcy would be that each one of these minute fragments of territory would

become a sovereign state, with the ruler given the power of life and death over his subjects. Lord Mountbatten was not slow to sympathise, but appeared powerless against London's legalistic view of the treaties.

Worse was to follow nearer the date of independence; Jinnah made a public announcement that he would guarantee the independence of any state which fell within the boundaries of Pakistan. He could afford to say so because there were only about a half-a-dozen states in Pakistan and most of these were very small, against over 500 in India covering 48 per cent of the total Indian territory after partition. But the effect of his announcement could have been dangerous for India, as it was intended to be; it was an incitement to the states on the border of the two Dominions, and even to some which were well within India, not to throw in their lot with India whose policy was now clearly known to be that the states should form an integral part of one or the other Dominion. At a meeting with the rulers of two key states of Rajasthan, Jodhpur and Jaisalmere, both contiguous to Pakistan as well as to India but ruled and mostly inhabited by Hindus, Jinnah signed a blank sheet of paper and invited the Maharaja of Jodhpur to fill in any conditions he liked.

And Jinnah's was not the only influence inimical to India's interests. Another was also at work, the old Political Department of the Government of India which was the main operative link between the Paramount Power and the Indian States. The department was soon to be replaced by the States Ministry formed by the interim government under Sardar Patel and Menon. But even in its dying days "the Political Department was adding to our worries" according to Menon in *The Story of the Integration of Indian States*. It "encouraged the Nawab of Bhopal in his efforts to evolve 'a third force' out of the states and reports were being brought to me by some of the rulers that they were being instigated not to accede to India".

As soon as Nehru moved in the Constituent Assembly on December 13, 1946, that India should be proclaimed "an independent sovereign Republic... wherein all power and authority are derived from the people", a dispute developed between him and Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer, Prime Minister of Travancore and a member of a Negotiating Committee set

up by the Chamber of Princes. He said that while the Indian States were anxious to cooperate in the work of the Constituent Assembly, they might be unable to do so if the Assembly deliberately took the line that sovereignty resided in "the peoples" of the states and that "on the extinction of Paramountcy the Crown would have ceded the sovereignty to the people".

On January 29, 1947, the Chamber declared: "The entry of the states into the Union of India"—by that time the partition was still a little distance in the future—"shall be on no other basis than that of negotiation, and the final decision shall rest with each state. The proposed Union shall comprise, as far as the States are concerned, the territories of only such States or groups of States as may decide to join the Union." Even in respect of states which agreed to join, the Chamber made it clear. "The States will retain all subjects and powers other than those ceded by them to the Union.... The proposed Union of India will therefore exercise only such functions in relation to the states in regard to Union subjects as are assigned or delegated by them to the Union." In other words, even if a state agreed to join the Union, it would not necessarily cede all the subjects which the Constitution might have assigned to the Union; the scope for variation, and therefore confusion, was endless. Here were all the makings of the "haphazard fragmentation" which Churchill had predicted.

Some of the states took one more step closer to the brink. While a number of states agreed to send representatives (nominated by the Princes, not elected by the people as in "British India") to the Constituent Assembly (which they had already declared would not commit them to participation in the Union) six major states decided not to do even that much, at least not for the time being: Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore, Bhopal, Indore and Kashmir. In a further tightening of the confrontation, the All-India States' Peoples Conference demanded by a resolution that any state abstaining from the Constituent Assembly should be regarded as hostile by the rest of India. Next, Travancore became the first to take the plunge; in a series of declarations issued by Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer, the state took a new constitution into itself, proclaimed its independence from India, and resigned from the Chamber

of Princes because the Chamber had not aimed directly at full independence for the States. In one of his statements Sir Ramaswami said that Travancore was "better fitted than almost any other part of India for independence, because it has a considerable seaboard and practically the monopoly of several important commodities". As if to make it clear that hostility was implicit, he announced that representatives would be exchanged with Pakistan as soon as the latter was formed. This would be "especially valuable", he said; "it banishes the prevalent fear as to rice supplies for Travancore which can hereafter be expected from Karachi". In a war of statements between New Delhi and Trivandrum, the capital of Travancore, there were clear threats of economic sanctions and reprisals, and more than a hint by Sir Ramaswami that he would appeal to Britain for help.

As might have been expected, a few other states also began to show hesitations, making discreet use of Sir Ramaswami's arguments—in fact the surprise is that more did not—but large-scale trouble arose only over Hyderabad and Kashmir. Hyderabad started with what Travancore had done at a later stage in its revolt—it decided to exchange representatives with Pakistan. At first it stated, on August 13, that is two days before power was to be transferred to India and Pakistan, that "until mutual relations between the Dominions of India and Pakistan are known, Hyderabad cannot contemplate organic union with either Dominion". Next, it expressed the hope, on August 14, that Hyderabad "will always remain associated in some measures with the British Commonwealth", and finally it announced that when power was transferred and Paramountcy ended, the state would become independent and sovereign.

This was in many ways a far more dangerous threat than Travancore's. Hyderabad was not only the largest Indian State but it stood astride the horizontal axis of the whole of southern India. Its independence could have severed India into two in an even more destructive manner than partition was to do; all the huge and valuable chunk of "British India" lying north of Hyderabad, including the states of Madras, Kerala, Mysore, and most of Andhra would have been cut off from northern and central India and probably lost.

Hyderabad did not have a seaboard but relatively narrow strips of Indian territory separated it from the sea. In the west particularly, one corner of Hyderabad jutted out close to Goa, a major port south of Bombay, which formed part of Portuguese India at that time. There were strong rumours that Portugal, out of hostility towards India which had already started agitating at the United Nations against conditions in Portuguese Africa, would send out its own forces from Goa to establish a link with Hyderabad and to give it an outlet to the sea. Rumours were also afloat that Turkey would make moves on behalf of Hyderabad because it had matrimonial links with Hyderabad, and Pakistan could have been counted upon not to be an idle spectator of these proceedings; the fact that Hyderabad's Ruler was a Muslim gave Pakistan a plausible entry into this issue. Some intrepid gun-running was already going on between Karachi and Hyderabad. The leader of an anti-Indian uprising in Hyderabad, Kasim Razvi, who was later to escape to Pakistan, was already predicting that Muslims of India "will be our fifth columnists" and exhorting the Muslims of Hyderabad "not to sheath your swords until the objective of Islam's supremacy is achieved". Later Hyderabad, a fabulously rich principedom, offered a sizeable loan to Pakistan.

Hyderabad's strength, by itself, did not add up to a great deal; but two circumstances made it sizeable. In the first place a large band of Muslim irregulars known as Razakaars, led by the fanatical Kasim Razvi who was gifted with highly evocative utterance, were planning to spread the fire of communal rioting throughout South India; many areas of this region had known such rioting in the past and had been made receptive to the sparks of his oratory by the widespread outbreak of communal warfare—rioting is too mild a word for it—in Pakistan and the whole of northern India. In the second place the bulk of the Indian army was already committed in Kashmir, where an actual war with Pakistan had been raging for some months.

Even without the threats of Kasim Razvi and the rioting which, within Hyderabad, had already ensued, the dawn of independence was red enough; blood was soaking through the entire fabric of India and Pakistan, and nobody quite knows how many hundreds of thousands of people were—not killed, because mere killing would have been mercy in comparison



with what went on — hacked and torn and burnt. India had already been given the sickening taste of blood by the Great Calcutta Killing, and Pakistan by what happened in Noakhali. But these were only teaser trailers for what was to follow. Nothing was to tarnish as much as the riots Lord Mountbatten's brilliant conduct of operations for the transfer of power and the resulting partition; no assurance by him was to prove so thoroughly worthless as what he told Maulana Azad.

In an eleventh-hour effort to save the Cabinet Mission plan Maulana Azad met Mountbatten on May 14, 1947, and expressed his fear that dangerous rioting would follow partition. "Without a moment's hesitation", Azad recorded afterwards, "Lord Mountbatten replied 'At least on this one question I shall give you complete assurance. I shall see to it that there is no bloodshed and riot. I am a soldier, not a civilian. Once partition is accepted in principle, I shall issue orders to see that there is no communal disturbance anywhere in the country. If there should be the slightest agitation, I shall take the sternest measures to nip the trouble in the bud. I shall not use even the armed police. I will order the Army and the Air Force to act, and I will use tanks and aeroplanes to suppress anybody who wants to create trouble.'" It is not that he did not try to live up to his pledge; his soldierly dispatch and military system of working came through in nothing so much as in organising, with the map-room methods he had evolved during the war, the movement of huge convoys of refugees and their protection against destruction. But nothing availed against the fury that had been released by the Great Calcutta Killing and by the events of which the killing itself was the maniacal child.

By the end of the first week of March, 1947, nearly every town of any consequence in Punjab was more or less seriously infected with this epidemic; the largest, Amritsar, had been burnt down by one-tenth, and more and more areas in the countryside were catching fire, where any kind of control was soon going to be impossible. The city of Multan was ablaze, and mobs had broken out of it, armed with whatever they could lay their hands on, to spread destruction in the villages of the area. Two battalions of airborne troops were sent to Multan on March 9; 2,000 men of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and the Suffolk and Wiltshire Regiments to Amritsar.

But they were like handsprays against a forest fire; the effect was local and temporary.

In the meantime horror took a new form: railway trains carrying refugees began to be forced to a halt at hostile stations, to be burnt and looted; refugees trying to escape were slaughtered or caught on spearpoint and thrust back into the fire. On September 22, a train laden with Muslim refugees from Delhi was caught by Sikh marauders near Amritsar; about 200 of its occupants were killed. Two days later several thousand Muslims attacked a train carrying Sikhs and Hindus near Lahore and butchered 350, wounding about 250 more. The most outrageous attack occurred on January 12, 1948: a train convoy carrying 2,400 Hindus and Sikhs from the Frontier Province was attacked by 3,000 Pathans at a station in Punjab, two-thirds of the refugees were killed and nearly all the rest wounded. No one seemed safe, whether he stayed at home or fled.

In a fresh recrudescence in Calcutta, 40 people were killed and 300 injured on October 27; by October 31, 146 people had been killed and over a thousand injured in Dacca, in East Bengal. In the country districts of East Bengal the casualties were higher; the official figure for two places, Noakhali and Tipperah, was nearly 300 killed. Back in the cities, especially in Bengal and Punjab and in some parts of UP which were congested with Hindus and Muslims, the violence and casualties continued to mount week after week as the date of the actual partition approached. But the climax came in the two or three weeks preceding and following the date of partition, August 15, and this fire was to die only when there was no fuel left: no Hindus in West Pakistan and no Muslims in the Indian districts of Punjab which were close to the border. Nearly 200 persons were killed in Lahore in two days just before partition, 800 Hindus and Sikhs were massacred in a village not far off on August 26. The Sikhs imposed a fearful retribution upon the Muslims in the towns and villages of East Punjab, and it was there perhaps that the brutality of man to man reached its crescendo before it spent itself down to the sickening silence which follows death. The number murdered in the rioting or killed by its aftermath — pestilence and starvation, and the severe winter which followed — was probably not

far from half a million.

The long and lingering pay-off of this madness was the largest movement of uprooted people in the world's history—by the end of 1947 more than ten million people had been herded and driven out of one country to the other, and for years were to be crippling burden on the economy of both. Since most of the refugees were peasants, their uprooting meant an additional severe set-back to the agriculture of the whole country.

A connected disaster, parallel to the rioting in its causes and consequences, was the war between India and Pakistan over Kashmir; its immediate form and impact were still more dramatic than of the rioting. The war, which broke out before India and Pakistan were even two months old, and its underlying causes, were to become the strongest influence on the foreign policy of the two countries in later years, and virtually the sole determinant of their relations with each other.

The "facts" of the case are easily narrated. The state was a coveted prize, not only, along with Hyderabad, the largest of the princely states, and rich in untapped water, mineral and forest resources, studded with exquisite summer and tourist resorts, but also of great strategic importance. It juts out into Central Asia and shares borders with Asian Russia, Tibet and the Sinkiang region of China; one of its northern districts, Ladakh, is one of the great cross-roads of history.

Right up to the eve of partition and for some weeks thereafter, India was willing to see the state accede to Pakistan. On this point Campbell-Johnson's testimony, recorded, in November 1948, is that "Lord Mountbatten himself had visited Kashmir in June (1947) and, armed with an assurance from Sardar Patel on the Indian side, strongly advised (the Maharaja) that any decision taken prior to 15th August would be acceptable to both successor States". Of India's attitude after August 15, Campbell-Johnson wrote on October 28, 1947: "Subsequently the Indian Government's policy has been to refrain from inducing Kashmir to accede (to India). Indeed, the States Ministry, under Patel's directions, went out of its way to take no action which could be interpreted as forcing Kashmir's hand, to give assurances that accession to Pakistan would not be taken amiss by India." But instead of taking advantage of the

clear choice available, the Maharaja only vacillated and decided only to sign a standstill agreement with the two Dominions, binding each to continue their normal economic relations with it and to leave the Maharaja free to decide his future course of action.

But immediately after partition the plot began to thicken. First in relatively mild tones but then in screeching imprecation, the Governments of Pakistan and Kashmir began to hurl accusations at each other. The Maharaja complained of "a steady and increasing strangulation of supplies to my state", and judging by the links which he said Pakistan had severed, it would appear that a total economic, financial and communications blockade was being imposed. The diatribe then moved on to allegations of violence. Pakistan complained that bands of Dogras, or the Hindu plainmen of the State, were killing the Muslims, the Kashmir Government alleged that "thousands" of armed Pakistanis had infiltrated into the State and committed "horrors on non-Muslims".

The Government of India stood quite outside the dispute, until, on October 15, 1947, the Kashmir Government warned Pakistan that unless "all the inequities being perpetuated" were stopped, "the Government would be justified in asking for friendly assistance". Pakistan flung back its reply that "the only object of intervention by an outside power would be the process of suppressing Muslims so as to enable Kashmir to join the Dominion of India". Whether India willed it or not she became a party to the dispute first by the allegations of others and then, within a few days, in fact as well as in law. The infiltrations by the tribesmen became an invasion within days, at first with the unacknowledged and then freely admitted support of the regular army of Pakistan. The State's forces, which were small, fell back on all points of contact with the attackers, lost control of towns which were key points of communication, and seemed in no position at all to hold even the State's capital, Srinagar.

On October 26, the Deputy Premier of Kashmir flew to New Delhi for help and received the legally correct answer — whatever its motives, in the eyes of Pakistan — that since Kashmir was not a part of India, New Delhi had no legal competence to intervene. The next day Kashmir's accession to India was

signed, and the Government prepared to fly out forces for the defence of a vast and sprawling state, key areas of which had already been occupied by the enemy. In any circumstances this would have been a hazardous venture, in those days of October 1947 it was desperate. India's land communications with the State were rudimentary at that time and every soldier and gun and supplies for both had to be sent out by air. But military planes—and even civilian, which were immediately requisitioned—were very few, and at the time this daringly improvised airlift began there was no knowing how long the airfield in Srinagar, the only one in Kashmir, would remain in friendly hands.

Lord Mountbatten, the man who knew most about military affairs in India at that time, and the Chiefs of Staff were entirely against accepting the military hazards involved; at a meeting of the Defence Committee held only two days earlier, General Lockhart read out a telegram received from the Headquarters of the Pakistan Army—there was still some liaison between the two sides at that level—that 5,000 tribesmen had attacked and captured Muzzafarabad and Domel, and that considerable tribal reinforcements could be expected. Reports showed that they were already little more than 35 miles from Srinagar. There was as yet no admission by Pakistan that its regular forces were also involved (this was to be confirmed, even by the United Nations, later), but India had no reason to hope that any troops it flew out would not have to take on the Pakistan army itself.

The rest of the Kashmir story belongs to subsequent chapters; the book ends before the story. But the fact which stood out as the first winter of Independent India began was that a young Dominion, threatened in the south by ambitions in Hyderabad, consumed in the north by the fires of communalism, with an army stretched to the limit by the demands of law and order, undertook a military commitment of unknown dimensions in Kashmir and against the advice of all the senior (British) brass available. The thrill of accepting the challenge electrified the country, but what the future might bring was entirely unknown.

The fighting in Kashmir was to intensify three anxieties immediately, each with its own separate focus and each making the prophecies quoted at the start of this book seem much more to the point than the hopes and determination of the

nationalist leaders. One anxiety was whether the passions which the fighting would undoubtedly rouse would loosen the sutures of India's multi-racial, multi-lingual society of many religions. The second, what opportunities such loosening of the Indian fabric and the preoccupation of the Indian army would provide for the incipient private armies which were known to be forming up? And third, even if the fabric held, would the general air of violence let India's polity develop in the democratic and secular shapes intended for it by the leaders of the Congress?

The dispute about Kashmir, which was both the cause and effect of rapidly deteriorating relations with Pakistan, had an obvious bearing on communal relations in India. In part the effect was beneficial; the regular and irregular forces of a self-proclaimed Islamic theocracy were attacking a Muslim majority state at the edge of India, and the people of the state were resisting the attack, Muslims as much as Hindus, assisted by the army of a self-proclaimed secular state. The spectacle did good to the hearts of those who had hopes that India would become a fully secular democracy. But in the context of the communal rioting the more insidious effect was different, and it was to become more and more dangerous as the years went by and Pakistan kept on pressing its claim on Kashmir, largely on the basis of religion.

As if to give more than sufficient confirmation of these fears, the Congress President, Acharya Kripalani, made an ominous statement in November 1947, in which his hints were barely concealed—and he did not belong to an organisation which proclaimed communal beliefs. He said: "The safety of the Muslims must come from their Hindu neighbours who form the majority of the population and from whom the majority in the rank of the police and the army must come. These will not be active in affording this protection unless they know that their co-religionists in Pakistan are getting a fair deal." In other words the process had already begun—twenty years later, India and Pakistan have still not seen its end—under which two interconnected and difficult problems were to act and react on each other incessantly, each making the other more difficult still. As relations between India and Pakistan grew worse, they added to the friction of Hindu-Muslim relations; the latter reacted on the Muslims' sentiment in Kashmir, and as that

expressed its resentment against India, the hostility of India-Pakistan relations became sharper.

Even before the decade of the 40's ended it was possible to see what kind of forces were waiting in the wings to take over if widespread disorder should persist in either Dominion. In both the more extremist communalists had banded themselves together into para-military organisations, each with its uniforms, symbols, lines of command and an exclusive code of loyalty to itself: the Khaksars in Pakistan, which were a much more disciplined organisation than the Razakaars of Kasim Razvi in Hyderabad, and the RSS in India, an organization of Hindu extremism which was much more disciplined than both.

The riots had given both the Khaksars and the RSS an opportunity to tighten and expand their organizations. Each took a blood-soaked hand in the riots and at the same time covered itself with the glory of extremist nationalism, because to the sick mind of each Dominion in those days it was service to the national cause to drive out the minorities, which each regarded as enemy within the gate. Secondly, each found ready and fanatical recruits in the refugees pouring in from the other Dominion; the refugees, their minds blackened by their gruesome experiences and their blood on the boil for revenge, were readymade material for such organizations. The RSS especially reaped a good harvest and at the end of 1947 claimed a membership of five million. But its strength lay even more in the disciplined and well-drilled cadres it had formed than in its numbers.

When the official indictment against the RSS came, early in 1948, its contents were sweeping but did not take anyone by surprise. "Undesirable and even dangerous activities have been carried on by the RSS", it said. "In several parts of the country individual members of the RSS have indulged in acts of violence involving arson, robbery, dacoity and murder and have collected illicit arms and ammunition. They have been found circulating leaflets exhorting the people to resort to terrorist methods, to collect arms, to create disaffection against the Government and the police and the military."

A different kind of private army, less disciplined and less numerous but more strongly motivated and potentially more pervasive, was being built up by the Communists; this began

to show its hand within the first year of independence. In the style of their Chinese counterparts and according to their copy book rules of insurrection, the Indian Communists began to look for what they could set up as "liberated areas". They found a ready guide map in Stalin's theory about India's linguistic nationalisms and settled for Telengana, a rocky, backward and somewhat isolated area where poverty was great and the sense of resentment high—because of the poverty and isolation to begin with, because of a zamindar-dominated and exploitative economy, and because the Congress itself had been nourishing the linguistic self-awareness of this area for a long time.

Telengana is now part of Telugu-speaking Andhra, the state where, after some frightful disturbances in 1953, the process of the linguistic reorganization of India's map was to start. But by the middle forties the local Communists were already accusing the Congress of "destroying our Andhra national movement". "We won't rest content with a separate Telugu province" one of their best known leaders had announced, "A united Telugu nation should exist in the independent Indian federation as an independent Telugu kingdom." This was to be a fragment, then, of the map of post-British India as the Communists saw it. They had already declared that after the British left power would not pass to Nehru or his provisional government but "fourteen sovereign regional constituent assemblies", corresponding to the fourteen main linguistic regions of the country "each empowered to decide whether or not to join the Indian Union".

Whether their motive was the ideology of sub-nationalisms or the hope that a disintegrated India would be easier to capture than an united one was a matter for the Communists' conscience. But in Telengana they were about to make a test which, if successful, would have become a working model for them in other linguistic regions, completely subverting the linguism of the Congress. Accepting the force of language as a fact of political life, the Congress had organised itself some years earlier on linguistic lines; the jurisdiction of most of its state-level committees coincided with linguistic boundaries. The experiment had proved a success in giving vitality to the party, and according to Nehru "the Congress became a mass move-



ment only when it based its organization on language". But at no time was there any doubt in the minds of Congressmen that linguistic areas, organized as the constituent units of the federation, would be an integral part of the Union and subordinate to the all-India Constitution. For the Communists on the other hand, linguism was a design for disruption.

Independent India, enmeshed already in a war in Kashmir, slashed about by communal rioting, was now faced with the prospect of the politics of street fighting and private armies. But it was the politics of assassination which struck the most infamous if not the most grievous blow; Mahatma Gandhi was shot on January 30, 1948, by a person who had close links with an extremist Hindu organization. Even more than the death of thousands in the communal carnage, this single and most indefensible death brought home to all Indians and the rest of the world that we had sunk to a depth from which recovery would be exceedingly difficult; prophecy must have licked its lips at the thought that the dissolution of India was now only a matter of time. In one single flash the weakness of the joints of Indian society was shown up. Immediate collapse was averted as it quickly became known that the assassin was a Hindu, not a Muslim, but slow disintegration still seemed the most likely prospect.

The immediate cause of this totally impersonal tragedy—the assassin and the victim had no personal acquaintance with each other—was a somewhat limited one. India decided—though who had decided is not clear, because Nehru, the Prime Minister, and Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister, were on opposite sides on this issue—to withhold payment of Rs. 55 crores due to Pakistan as its share of the Government's cash assets on partition. Resentment against Pakistan was so intense at this time that even this paltry revenge seemed to cause great satisfaction among the people. Mahatma Gandhi, Lord Mountbatten and Nehru were against the decision; popular credit therefore went to Patel for it.

But on January 13, Mahatma Gandhi started another of his famous "fasts unto death" and one of his conditions for breaking it was that the money should be paid to Pakistan at once. As the fast progressed and Gandhiji's reserves of physical energy dwindled, relations between Nehru and Patel became severely

strained and popular impatience began to surround the Mahatma. On the fifth day the fast ended, after the Government had surrendered; the same evening a bomb burst at Gandhiji's prayer meeting. It burst ineffectively, but it also turned out to be an ineffective warning to the authorities about what was to follow within the fortnight.

The Mahatma's second condition for ending the fast also became the second cause of his death, less immediate than the first but more pervasive. With all the nobility of his soul, Mahatma Gandhi was in revolt against the communal violence raging all around him, even in Delhi; but with all the bitterness in their hearts thousands of people were bent upon wreaking revenge upon Indian Muslims for the murder of the minorities in Pakistan. Most bitter and violent were the Sikhs, who were the special victims of Muslim violence in Pakistan and fearful avengers in the cities and countryside of Northern India. They had no patience with those who preached communal harmony in India, because they could see no one who did the same in Pakistan (the only one who could have, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan of NWFP, better known then and since as the "Frontier Gandhi", was already in a Pakistani prison, where he was to stay until 1964).

If there had been a Gandhi each in India and Pakistan, both might have been saved. But the restraints Mahatma Gandhi applied in India could not be stomachied by many because there were no reciprocal restraints in Pakistan. When Gandhi decided that he would not end his fast unless violence ended in Delhi and a peace committee of all communities, including Sikhs, was formed, bands of Sikhs paraded outside his house carrying placards "Let him die".

But it was the third and outermost ring of the causes of his death which mattered most to the future of India; as Nehru said in his homage to the Mahatma in Parliament, the assassination was "not merely an isolated act of a mad man" but the result of "the atmosphere of violence and hatred" which had enveloped India for several months preceding; it was that which killed the greatest Indian of modern times and could unleash the dissolution of the country. A movement for freedom which, from the Indian side, had been singularly free of violence for a quarter of a century had turned barbarously

violent in its hour of achievement, and now seemed headed for inevitable self-destruction; it is this change which enabled thoughts of such a far-reaching assassination to take shape in the mind of Nathuram Vinayak Godse. Hence the thought in the mind of Rajagopalachari when he heard the news, in Calcutta, that Gandhi had been shot; within minutes he telephoned Mountbatten to say "take the utmost precautions about Nehru". Hence also the intense but unavailing anxiety in Mountbatten's mind when he arrived at Birla House, the place of the assassination, to find Nehru standing on a gate-post, waist-high above the crowd, a clear target for another bullet, his face grey and drawn and beyond the reach of security arrangements. Two days before Gandhi died two men with hand grenades had been arrested at a public meeting Nehru was to address in Amritsar.

As had happened in other countries and has happened twice in this—Shastri made his peace pact with Pakistan mandatory for his country by his death within a few hours of signing the Tashkent Declaration—precept is best turned into practice by the martyrdom of the preceptor; Mahatma Gandhi's assassination ensured the success of Nehru's efforts to make India a secular democracy, even though evidence of the success was to remain hidden from the eyes of most Indians for seventeen years and eight months. But in that fateful winter of 1948 people's thoughts were not about a distant future; the immediate uncertainties were a cause of grave anxiety.

Mahatma Gandhi's death had removed not only the greatest preacher of the independence movement but a bridge between different elements in the Congress. The personal loyalty owed to him by the leaders of all factions in the party, from the far Left to a Right virtually indistinguishable from Hindu communalism of the most orthodox convictions, was more responsible than anything else for keeping the Congress intact. He was also the Government's greatest link with the people. What would his death do to the one link which mattered most for India's future, the political association—even if personal friendship was no longer possible—between Nehru and Patel?

When the two leaders first came face to face in the room where Gandhiji's body lay, Mountbatten told them that at his last meeting with Gandhiji the latter had said his greatest wish

was to see his two principal lieutenants fully reconciled. Their first and spontaneous reaction was to embrace each other. But would that be enough to heal their long-standing and rapidly growing differences? Now the nerves of both leaders were under still greater strain, Nehru's because communalism had claimed the one life he valued most, Patel's because people were throwing dark hints about his negligence, if not worse, as Home Minister which made this assassination possible, and earlier the large number of Muslim casualties in Delhi. With the death of the most senior member of the triumvirate who was also the peace-maker between the other two, would any kind of a team be left at the top? Who would be its members and who the leader, and where would it try to take the country and the party?

In the midst of such doubts at the top and chaos below, independence came to India. "A moment comes which comes but rarely in history", Nehru said eloquently to the Constituent Assembly a few hours before India became independent "when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. . . . The achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity to the great triumph and achievements which await us." These were brave words to use for the spread of events from the partition of the country and the bloodbath which accompanied it, to the war in Kashmir and the near-war in Hyderabad, and the assassination, which ended an era, of the greatest leader of the freedom movement, one of the few men in history who created a new style and spirit for a nation's fight for its freedom.

## CHAPTER 3

# "THE BLOODLESS REVOLUTION" AND EMERGING ORDER

### RETREAT OF THE REBELS

THE FIRST three years of independence and the integration of States provide the best example of one of the facts of modern India's history which was referred to earlier,<sup>1</sup> that often the darkest and best phases at least partly overlap in time; one takes its shape within sight of the other. The one problem which more than any other appeared likely in 1947 to reduce India to fragments, the option which the States acquired upon the lapse of Paramountcy, also became the provocation for her greatest achievement in the first three years and remains probably the greatest so far. At no time, before or since, was modern India closer to total disintegration and there are few examples in the world's history of so many virtually independent states being brought together as rapidly into a single union with so little use or threat of force.

The architects of this silent revolution were Sardar Vallabhai Patel and his brilliant factotum, V. P. Menon. Nehru's role was not as minor as has been alleged in some chronicles of the times. More than any one else he was the inspiration behind the States' Peoples' Conference, a force the Princes had to look at over their shoulders as they hesitated between accession and independence. Major policies had to be approved by him, at least in outline, and it was probably Nehru, not Patel, who brought Mountbatten so effectively into the picture, thus exposing the more reluctant Princes to the charm and prestige of a cousin of the King, a psychological pressure which they found hard to resist. These, however, are relatively small slices of credit; the cake must go to Patel and Menon. They made a perfect pair.

Menon had the grasp of detail and the expert's knowledge-

<sup>1</sup> See p. iii.

of constitutional affairs. He did most of the more lengthy talking to the Princes. Patel on the other hand was an intangible presence, sometimes seen and sometimes not, but always felt. It was rarely that his aid had to be called by Menon, but even this aloofness added to his power. It enhanced the feeling which had been building up for some time that the Sardar should be taken much more seriously than Nehru; as a friend he would be reliable and generous, as an enemy implacable.

Patel devised and Menon executed their manoeuvres so quickly that they rolled into one what were once intended to be several different stages: the consent of the Princes to take part in the Constituent Assembly; Standstill Agreements between the States and the Union pending final decision; the signing of Instruments of Accession, under which the states acceded only three subjects to the Union—Defence, External Affairs and Communications; enlargement of the accession through further negotiations; integration of the smaller states to form more viable administrations; internal reforms to bring their administrations into line with the provinces; and finally, at some distant date—immeasurably distant it seemed on the eve of independence—the states' merger with the provinces to bring all parts of the country equally under the unified jurisdiction of the Central Government. Before one stage was completed the next began, so that in just over two years from the date of independence all trace of princely rule disappeared and all Princes went into retirement except a few who were appointed to new positions by the Government or found new occupations for themselves.

Virtually overnight and—except in the case of Hyderabad and Kashmir—without a shot being fired, half a million square miles and 90 million people were added to India and they made a peaceful transition from feudal loyalties to the willing acceptance of modern constitutional concepts and practices. In a parallel though less significant process, the zamindari were abolished and their cultivators brought into direct revenue relationship with the government; the zamindars went the way of their gilded cousins, the Princes. Zamindari abolition has often been regarded as the start of an economic process looking towards more equitable distribution of land among the people. But in retrospect it seems more correct to regard it as a post-

script to the political process of ending all anachronistic jurisdictions.

Here and there petulant gestures of frustration cropped up. At the end of a session of joint grilling by Mountbatten and Menon, the Maharaja of Jodhpur signed the Instrument of Accession but instantly pulled out his pistol to threaten Menon. The Maharaja of Indore walked with unseeing eyes past a delegation of Princes which had been sent to persuade him; when he finally signed the accession papers later he sent them to Patel in an ordinary postal envelope without any covering letter. Some of the Princes went through the motions of pinning conditions on their accession but did not need too much persuasion to drop them. Some Princes were as much moved by patriotism towards willing accession as others were moved toward an illusory independence by personal ambition or their suspicion of the Congress or the sheer novelty of being without the protective umbrella of Paramountcy. But none of them could for very long resist the geo-political facts of their situation, the certain knowledge that the pressure of their people's demands would build up, and the lesson which even a brief look at the map would read.

First the 550 odd states were reduced to about 30 units by merging many — 219 with a population of 12 million and an area of 85,000 square miles — with the provinces and many more, over 300, with 25 million people and 170,000 square miles, with each other. Then by rapid stages the number and scope of acceded subjects were so greatly expanded that there was little difference left between the administration of the states and of the former British India provinces. Princely rule thus became a thing of the past, and the little that was left of it was to disappear in the middle fifties under the linguistic reorganization of states almost throughout India.

Only Hyderabad stood out, cunningly and stubbornly, and forced New Delhi to remove the dead line on accession, which was August 15. Even so, and as late as November, 1947, Hyderabad signed only a Standstill Agreement and then proceeded to engage India in several months of exasperating negotiations, its delegation at various times accepting terms of an agreement which it would repudiate on its return to the state. In the meantime the state's relations with New Delhi

grew rapidly worse and the situation on its borders tense both on account of the activities of Razakaars and retaliatory Indian action, sometimes by the police and sometimes by the people. Within the state the population, mostly Hindu, began to resent, sometimes violently, the increasing preponderance of Muslim communalists in the councils of the Nizam.

Early in August 1948, a serious clash occurred between Indian armed forces and armed bands of Razakaars which had laid siege to an Indian enclave inside the state. On September 7, the Government of India asked the Nizam "for the last time" to disband the Razakaars, allow Indian troops to "restore law and order in the state", and agree to "the re-posting of adequate military forces of the Government of India so that there should be no doubt in the public mind in Hyderabad and outside as to the security of person and property". The Hyderabad Government, as might have been expected, refused; it blamed the insecurity upon "outside elements," "raids from across the border" and "constant threats by the Government of India" and defended the Razakaars as a people's response to such threats. Only time was thus needed for New Delhi's ultimatum to go into effect.

The Government of India moved even sooner than expected; speculation had it then and later that Sardar Patel took the decision when he heard of the death of Jinnah on September 11, 1948, which ruled out the danger of Pakistan moving in to aid Hyderabad by creating a diversion elsewhere. On September 13, Indian forces began to march upon Hyderabad from several directions under the overall command of Lt.-Gen. Rajendrasinji, himself a man from one of the states in Saurashtra which had acceded to India. After a four and a half days of quite heavy fighting the Hyderabad forces surrendered, the government resigned, the Razakaars were ordered to disband. On September 17, the Nizam announced that he wished to open "a new chapter of friendliness" with India and wanted his people to live in "integrated harmony" with the people of India.

The Government of India reciprocated and announced that the Nizam's position would be fully respected. Nehru said in a broadcast on September 18: "Circumstances compelled us to take this action in Hyderabad. Fortunately it was brief, and we return with relief to the paths of peace again." Anticipating



by seventeen years sentiments which were to be expressed again during the Indo-Pakistan fighting in 1965, he added: "It is a remarkable thing, and full of good augury for the future, that not a single communal incident occurred in the whole length and breadth of this country. I am deeply grateful for this." This particular augury did not hold for long. But on November 24, the Nizam announced—though he avoided the precise words—Hyderabad's accession to India "in honourable partnership in a united and democratic India".

On November 25, the State of Mysore also announced accession, after holding out for as long as Hyderabad but in a less dramatic way. On November 26, Sardar Patel made the formal announcement that the accession of these two states was accepted, completing, as he must have said with entirely justified pride, "the bloodless revolution" he had started two years earlier. By this time the 550 odd states India inherited with independence had been reduced to only nine units; the six Unions of States—Saurashtra, Madhya Bharat, Vindhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, PEPSU and the United State of Travancore and Cochin, and the three large states which remained by themselves—Mysore, Hyderabad and Kashmir. But the Princes who presided over the six Unions and the three separate states had virtually the same relationship with their ministries—popularly elected, and after 1951 on the basis of adult franchise, as every other ministry in India—and the Union Government, as the Governors of the British India States had, who were appointed by the Union President.

November 26 was a proud day for India for another reason also; on that day the Constituent Assembly finally adopted the Constitution after nearly three years of labour. From December 9, 1946, to this date it sat for 165 days to debate and adopt a constitution which, remarkable for many of the other features also, *built impressive dykes against the uncertainties* which had most assailed Indian minds: would constitutionalism prevail or alternatives ranging from lawlessness to personal rule or the dictatorship of extremism; could constitutional unity be built out of clashing diversities; would the liberalism shown by the leaders of the freedom movement survive in free India? On all three counts the Constitution gave all the assurance that a constitution can; the spirit of the debate added some more.

# 315 ARTICLES



A written constitution is always a safeguard against arbitrary government. India was to have not only a written constitution but the longest in the world; a draft of 315 articles expanded to nearly 400 before the amendments were over. Too long, some thought; too detailed for the needs of a still evolving society. But it was needed by a society in which there were few well-established constitutional conventions which could have been assumed without being written out. Another reason for the length was the painstaking but reassuring effort made to incorporate in it all that was seen to be best in the numerous other constitutions which were studied and harmonized into a new whole by legal luminaries, till then a high proportion in the Congress leadership. Assisted by the able Constitutional Adviser, Sir B. N. Rau, piloted by that tireless man of monumental intellect, B. R. Ambedkar, they worked out a detailed constitution best suited to the political scene as they understood it.

In this sense the federal Constitution is unique. It has not resulted from the break-up of a unitary state by rebellion, revolution or war. It is not a compact between independent States which have agreed to come together for agreed purposes. It is not merely a codification of a pre-existing political situation. It is very much the product of the cool-headed deliberation of constitutional experts, influenced but not governed by the political situation existing outside their chamber. Hence the vast range of powers given to the Centre, much in excess of the actual predominance of the centripetal over centrifugal tendency of the times, a fact which accounts for some of the subsequent tensions. Hence also the subordination of these enormous powers to detailed provisions of the Constitution. The Centre has power to do numerous things which the federal centres in other countries cannot. But it can do them only within the limits of the Constitution and in the contingencies provided for in it. There is the most detailed demarcation of the respective areas of the Centre's powers and the States'. The former are not just an aggregate of what the States agreed to leave for the Centre after their own conceptions of "States rights" had been satisfied. The latter are not just what the Centre condescended to delegate downwards to them as was the case before the Act of 1935. The federation and the federating units

are equal and simultaneous creations of one single act, the Constitution.

In normal times and day-to-day functions the Constitution gives the States more autonomy than many federal constitutions do; in abnormal, it can convert itself into almost a unitary constitution. It leaves to the units the very areas where government most comes in contact with the people: almost the whole of the rural economy in its diverse aspects, most trades, commerce and communications within the state, most industries, education, public health, law and order, local self-government, police, and justice up to the High Court level. In all these areas the impact of the Central Government reaches down to the people only in so far as the State Governments may choose to transmit it. This in fact has turned out to be a major weakness of the Constitution, it has not given the Centre the power to alter conditions which most affect people. The administration of most Central powers is in the hands of the States; the Centre has few instruments of its own which reach right down to the ground. Each State has a single and unified administration for carrying out State as well as most Central laws; it is answerable to the State Government in the first instance even in respect of functions exercised on behalf of the Central Government. But should the Centre decide to take a hand it can become one of the hundred-handed gods of Hindu mythology.

No member of the federal scheme has the option to stay out or secede. Membership is mandatory. Its rules are not open to bargaining by the member; the only thing a State may voluntarily do is to transfer some of its powers to the Centre. These powers have been pre-determined and their interpretation entrusted to the Supreme Court, the apex of an integrated and countrywide judicial system, whose Judges are appointed by the President upon the recommendations of the Chief Justice and the Union Home Minister. State Governors, who are appointed by the President and hold office during his pleasure, can block any bill in the State Assembly until the President approves of it and can order any change in the administration they think necessary. The Centre can "direct" a State in the exercise of any Central power and the State may disobey the direction only upon pain of dismissal by the President.

a two-thirds majority of the Rajya Sabha, the Upper

House of Parliament which is elected by State legislatures in proportion to their strength, the Centre can take over any legislative power of a State or States temporarily. By a simple majority and the ordinary law-making process Parliament can alter a State's boundaries without its consent; alter it out of existence in fact. This power was probably taken because the reorganization of States to make them linguistically homogeneous areas was an impending certainty; once taken it stayed. If the Centre in its subjective judgment believes that the finances of a State are being seriously mismanaged it can take them over. If a Governor in his subjective judgment is satisfied that the government of a State cannot be carried on in accordance with the Constitution, the President can take over all functions of that State; if the President in his subjective judgment is satisfied that an emergency exists in the country, the Centre can take over all powers of the States and delegate to them only those that it thinks necessary, just as the Government of a unitary state may.

Next only to the fact that these powers exist, the most interesting fact is that they are so rarely used, especially by the President and Governors. There are several reasons for this of which not the least important is self-denial. A conscious attempt has been made to keep the extraordinary functions of the Constitution in abeyance (with some exceptions) so that the normal may have the chance to take root. This act of inaction succeeded sooner than would have appeared likely fifteen years ago. Parliament and legislatures grew to their full stature quickly, and the President and Governor would now find it difficult to upset the normal democratic process even if they wished, and there is no sign that they do. The Centre's, including Parliament's, interference with State powers is probably also inhibited by the fact that, with the same party in power everywhere, this would amount to the Central leadership of the party interfering with a State party—and State parties have grown too headstrong to brook interference. This partly explains why the Centre more often took over power in States where the Opposition had won or was about to.

As assurance of individual freedoms the Constitution records not only Directive Principles of State Policy (which are not justiciable) to support social, political and economic justice, but

also a set of Fundamental Rights which the courts have the power to enforce. Few Constitutions do both and none elaborates Fundamental Rights so comprehensively. The clauses relating to Fundamental Rights are especially entrenched; they may be suspended only if the President declares a state of emergency. No matter in which corner of the country their infringement may occur, the complainant can go right up to the Supreme Court in search of redress. This carries Fundamental Rights well beyond their revolutionary parentage in the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and in the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the U.S.A.

On January 26, 1950, a date annually observed now as Republic Day, India was proclaimed a Republic on the basis of this Constitution, and only another year and a half later, in the winter of 1951-52, the first elections ever to be held in India on the basis of adult franchise were to be put through, the first ever in the world with such an enormous electorate—160,000,000 voters—and the first in a series of exercises in democracy which are more responsible than any other single factor, not excluding Nehru, for the political transformation India has gone through since independence.

The immediate pay-off, of the promise of free and fair elections was the contribution it made to the collapse of the Communist rebellion in Telangana. Commentaries on India, even those concerned with the dangers of the rise of Communism, do not sufficiently recognise that Communism's failure to take over India is the more remarkable for the fact that in the early fifties India had all the reasons which China had for going Communist, plus some which China did not have. The pressures of poverty and the discontent which they breed were as great here as in China, the leaders of opinion as exposed as in China to the attractions of the Russian Revolution, especially as an answer to mass poverty. The breakdown of the normal fabric of society was as acute in India though less endemic than in China, and the deprived classes of society were not only a higher proportion of the total than in China but were more acutely deprived both in social and economic terms; the contrast between their condition and that of the privileged was more explosive.

in addition, the Indian political movement, being more

inclusive than the Chinese Communist party, had exposed a much larger proportion of people to prolong politicalisation, making them more sharply conscious of their frustration and more vulnerable to the strident slogans of Communism. Secondly, the Indian is not as averse to dogma as the Chinese, who were believed to be highly individualistic until the communisation of their country; the ideological rigidity of Communism would not have run counter to the temperament of the Indian. Thirdly, and this is more important, the Indian movement was more specifically a revolt against a Western power, Britain, than the Chinese revolution, which had also to contend against oppression by an oriental power, Japan. Therefore the anti-Western and anti-colonial slant of Communism should have found even better soil in India than China. If in spite of that Communism did not flourish in India as it did in China, it is because of four main factors, and all of them were at play in the early fifties.

Foremost among them is the safety valve which parliamentary democracy and the electoral apparatus have provided. The freedom movement had never quite spurned the ways of constitutional agitation through the legislative councils and other elective bodies. Even at the height of its extra-constitutional struggle it had one foot firmly planted in the constitutional process. Therefore attachment to the ballot-box was not unknown in India even prior to independence. But in November 1949, when the Constitution was finally adopted, adult franchise was introduced and the slogan "a vote for everyone" was carried all over the country. Whether or not this right was fully understood by everyone or judiciously exercised among the under-privileged at any rate there was the feeling that they had been given something new; on election day they flocked to the polling booths.

The freedom movement itself had left certain legacies behind which became the second main check on the spread of Communism in the early fifties. The Communists provoked popular displeasure, by their own advocacy of the dismemberment of India through their support for partition and for the right of self-determination for linguistic minorities. In the second place, the movement had imparted, along with greater political consciousness, a deep-seated respect for liberalism and for laws

which protected the rights of the individual against those of the government, especially an alien one as in this case ; the fight for civil liberties was a conspicuous adjunct of the freedom movement.

The third setback to the Communists was that they were not the only ones who could use the rhetoric of Socialism ; Nehru could do it too, and better. He was the first eminent politician in India with the power of mass appeal in his words, to preach what the Communists were to preach less effectively and later. Since the middle thirties he had been saying—and in his tempestuous election campaigns in 1936 and 1945 he said it with the fury of the wind: "We have accepted socialism as our goal not only because it seems to us right and beneficial but because there is no other way for the solution of our economic problems.... The mighty task we have undertaken demands the fullest cooperation of the masses of our people. That cooperation cannot come unless we put forward an objective which is acceptable to them and promises them results."

Coupled with this he had also been preaching the doctrine of peaceful change for a decade and a half. "It is sometimes said that rapid progress cannot take place by peaceful and democratic methods, and that authoritarian and coercive methods have to be adopted. I do not accept this proposition. Indeed, in India today any attempt to discard democratic methods would lead to disruption and would thus put an end to any immediate prospect of progress." The combined effect of his gospels could only be crippling for the Communists, and it was made more crippling by the fact that after independence Nehru did not hesitate to convert some of his precepts into policies ; in the very year in which the Communists began the uprising in Telengana, Nehru gave a socialistic slant to the Government's economic programme by getting the first Industrial Policy Resolution through Parliament. In other words he lived up to the diagnosis of one of the oldest Communist leaders in India, P. C. Joshi, for many years General Secretary of the Party, who wrote in 1930, as quoted by Michael Brecher: "The most harmful and dangerous obstacle to the victory of the Indian revolution is the agitation carried on by the 'Left' elements in the Indian National Congress, led by Jawaharlal Nehru..."

The fourth disadvantage for the Communists was the other



side of the very coin which they had thought would favour them—the virtual breakdown of law and order under the impact of the wave of communal riots. By its very nature the rioting gave strength to Hindu communalism, and Hindu parties of the extreme right were not slow in taking advantage of it. Their methods and inner discipline did not differ much from the Communists'; but their dogma made them regard Communism as something almost as poisonous as the opposing communalism of the Muslims. In later years these, and parties of economic conservatism, were to become a strong hedge against the spread of Communism. But their restraining influence could be felt even in the early fifties.

These factors began to "contain" Communism in India some time before that verb became current in the West. In the early and middle fifties they were to frustrate Communist attempts to form united fronts on a large scale in spite of the willingness the Communists now started to show to repudiate the Telengana "line" of insurrection and to invite even the lower bourgeoisie, such as the middle peasants, into their fronts. While these forces kept the insurrection from spreading, other attacked its local manifestation.

In the first place Moscow withdrew its encouragement; from about the end of 1952 it began to admit, however indirectly, that Indian unity had come to stay; the Communists too lost the taste, therefore, for secessionary tactics or for a base for using them. The party's full recantation was to come a little later, at the end of December 1953, when at the third party Congress the General Secretary, Mr. Ajoy Ghosh, said: "In the past many a time we scoffed at the concept of Indian unity and glorified separation (but) we have to realise that the Communist Party stands for the unity of India." But even two years earlier they had begun to realise that separatism was not the road to power which they had thought it was.

In the second place, the Government came down with a really heavy hand upon all insurrectionary movements, especially the Communists. At the beginning of 1949, when a strike was threatened by a small minority of railway workers' Unions which were controlled by the Communist Party, Nehru ordered large-scale arrest of Communist workers and leaders, and he added this powerful denunciation of the party: "The Com-

munist Party of India has, during the past years, adopted an attitude not only of open hostility to the Government but one which can be described as bordering on open revolt. The policy has been given effect to intensively in certain areas, and has resulted in violence, including murder, arson and looting as well as acts of sabotage. The House is aware of Communists' revolts that have taken place in countries bordering on India. It was presumably in furtherance of the same policy that attempts were made in India to incite people to active revolt." No party could hope to prosper greatly in the face of such an onslaught from such a leader, and the Communist Party did not. But worse was to follow for it. The State Governments followed up with severe action on their own. Many of them banned the Communist Party as illegal and all of them ordered the arrest of large numbers of Communist cadres.

These blows did more than merely to crush the Telengana rebellion. They rubbed into the Party some more of the many stains which it was going to need about five years to wash. It already carried the stigma it had earned between 1942 and the end of the war, that while Congress leaders courted imprisonment and thousands braved the wounds of the Quit India movement, the Communists joined hands with Britain's war effort. Now it was further exposed to the charge of being unpatriotic. People found it hard to believe, and were incensed when Nehru confirmed that so soon after independence had been won a political party was willing to work against it; this at least is the meaning they read into Nehru's references to China, and the suspicion was to be considerably enlarged in later years.

In parallel measures the Government brought under control the opposite threat, from private armies of the Right, of which the most conspicuous was the RSS. Its opposite number among the Muslims, the Khaksars, only went through the motions of assassinating Jinnah—the closest they ever came to it was on June 9, 1947, when they stormed in at a meeting between Jinnah and his party leaders in the ballroom of New Delhi's Imperial Hotel—but a man widely believed to be an RSS agent succeeded in shooting Mahatma Gandhi dead. But it was from this peak of its deeds that the RSS was to fall, like the Communists from the Telengana insurrection.

Nehru had been denouncing Hindu and Muslim communalism for more than fifteen years; he had carried the battle even to that stronghold of the Hindus' intellectual orthodoxy, the Benares University. But his success was never as rapid as after Gandhi's murder. Within four days the RSS was banned and 1,700 of its known leaders arrested. Largely due to the influence exerted by Patel, the ban was lifted eighteen months later but the popular revulsion was such that under its own flag at any rate the RSS could make little headway with its changed policy of direct entry into politics. It tried to function as the hidden arm of another party, the Jan Sangh, but everywhere the climate of opinion had been clouded for extremist Hinduism and especially for its para-military expressions.

But what helped even more in checking Hindu communalism was that the fires which gave it its steam were brought under control; the refugees were brought back from the edge of despair and the battle for Kashmir was won before it stopped. On August 18, 1947, the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan issued a joint appeal to rioters and made a joint declaration of determination to suppress the disorder. On August 9, all the top leaders of both Dominions met in Lahore and set up a co-ordinated headquarters of the Indian and Pakistani armies to organize protection for refugee convoys. On September 3, they met again and announced several specific measures for checking lawlessness and for running emergency camps for the refugees. On September 7, both Governments appointed special Ministers and created full-scale Ministries at the Dominion level and in the border states to see that these measures were carried out. The Indian Government also set up an Emergency Committee of the Cabinet to bring the weight of the whole government on this problem. On September 8, both Prime Ministers issued orders that rioters should be shot at sight and suspects put in concentration camps. On September 9, Nehru went on the air to say that "action on a war basis" would be taken "with no mercy for offenders". The same day a new military command, the Military Evacuation Organization, was created to organize swift and safe movement of the refugees to camps.

By that time all the main roads in Punjab were choked with long and slow-moving convoys of refugees—some were many miles in length and had nothing faster in them than bicycles and bullockcarts. Mountbatten flew over some of the convoys

and bullock-carts. Mountbatten flew over some of the convoys on September 21 and about one of them Campbell-Johnson wrote: "We flew over fifty miles against this stream of refugees without reaching its source." Only a super organization such as the MEO became could have got the traffic moving again. In many cases while the head of the convoy was in one Dominion the tail was still being hacked in the other. But the co-ordination at MEO's headquarters soon put an end to that and more peaceful and swifter movement of the millions began: with his extraordinary and cunning understanding of the mob, Patel appealed to the Sikhs not to attack convoys any more; "let as many Muslims get out of India as wish to, leave the door open and they will just pour into Pakistan". Between September 9 and 16, the MEO moved a million refugees—400,000 from India to Pakistan and 600,000 in the other direction. In four months more than 8,500,000 were moved, but as early as October 12, Nehru was able to announce at a Press conference that "We have definitely turned the corner".

By that he merely meant that the flood of migrations had begun to subside; what to do with the broken lives of the immigrants was still being worked out. But here against jobs were done with amazing speed and by the middle of January 1948 one and a half million peasants had been shown land—about million acres, mostly left by Muslim refugees—to which they could now apply themselves without waiting for complicated questions of ownership to be settled. Another million and a half refugees were still in various camps; work for a great many of them was set up there and grants provided to help them to make a start. Another million and a half had worked their way into the population of different states on their own, to seek their salvation as best they may. Within about a year or so the first and most stupendous stage of the job had been done and most able-bodied people had found some gainful employment, many hundreds of thousands adjusting themselves to ways of life and work which they had never known before.

Sympathy for the refugees was natural and expected; it came in large measure and in many practical forms. But most unexpected was the grit and will and determination shown by the uprooted people themselves to strike new root—that, and the admiration which filled the whole country for their

sturdy self-confidence and the capacity to work. The economy and general tempo of many a city in northern India were transformed by the refugees within a year or two; New Delhi itself became an outstanding example. The change in the countryside was even greater. Most of the Muslim farmers who went were far inferior to the Hindu and—especially—Sikh farmers who came; this accounts for the miracle of the East Punjab area which used to have a three million-ton food deficit before partition and three years after partition had a surplus of the same size. This also accounts, not the shutting down of any water supply by India as was alleged by Pakistan at the time, for the decline in West Punjab's agriculture in the first few years.

The change of fortunes in Kashmir was even more swift and, in the military sense, conclusive. In the last few days of October 1947, the Government carried out an airlift of troops and supplies to Kashmir about which Mountbatten, who had opposed the operation, said: "The speed of the fly-in on October 27th left our SEAC efforts standing." Campbell-Johnson added his own compliment later: "It certainly seems to have left Jinnah standing as well, and to have been a performance wholly outside his calculation."

A battalion of Indian troops was flown in within a few hours and by nightfall it secured the airfield; thereafter every plane-load of combat-ready forces drove off straight into battle, one of them in progress only four miles away. The surprise and shock brought the enemy's advance on Srinagar to a halt, and by November 3 his retreat had begun. On that day Indian forces captured the first of the enemy-held villages and, with close air support, began a concentrated drive along the road to Baramula, the main route of the enemy's advance on Srinagar.

In the next two days armoured support was flown in and a frontal attack made on Baramula itself, 30 miles down the road and the main enemy base in the Srinagar valley. The base was captured with heavy enemy casualties, as a result of Indian ground and air action. Other thrusts radiated out of Srinagar simultaneously, and on November 9, it was officially announced that the valley had been cleared of raiders. Then the penetration into surrounding mountains began, and into the plains of

human backs, were sent by the longer route, to be put together again on the approaches to Leh. Surprise again had a wonderful effect; Dras was recaptured on November 16, Kargil on November 24 and Khalatse on November 23. Skardu remained in Pakistan's hand but the threat to Leh was eliminated. At the end of December, 1947, India referred the dispute to the United Nations—a decision unpopular with Indian opinion at the time and deplored for years afterwards—and a cease-fire came into force on New Year's eve.

What was unpopular was not so much the cease-fire itself; even though Indian forces were daringly and successfully on the offensive it would not have been difficult for Nehru to sell the view that if possible the dispute should be settled by some other means. But the invitation to a third party's intervention—the U.N.'s—was resented, and with increasing bitterness over the years. Most people would have preferred a direct settlement with Pakistan.

There was a close parallel here to Nehru's decision at the time of Kashmir's accession: he made the accession conditional upon its popular confirmation later—under the auspices of a third party "if that would help". Popular confirmation was a novel condition and not much in favour with Nehru's colleagues in the Cabinet. However, it was in keeping with the spirit of the times—the whole scheme of the Cabinet Mission's plan, which the Congress had not only accepted but welcomed, hinged upon popular wishes in different parts of the country, whether directly expressed (as in NWFP) or indirectly, through elected legislatures, as in Punjab and Bengal. But what was unprecedented and became increasingly unacceptable to Indian opinion was third party jurisdiction over the reference to the people of Kashmir.

The developments involving these decisions clearly bear the Mountbatten stamp and together constitute a serious blot upon his otherwise remarkable and wholly constructive association with India; the idea of a plebiscite and of U.N. supervision was fastened to the situation by Mountbatten. How great was his influence on the whole scene, and how intimately, through Britain, it affected Kashmir debates in the U.N., is borne out by the close resemblance between the proposals initiated by Mountbatten, as Campbell-Johnson establishes, and the actual

from which U.N. intervention took. The proposals Mountbatten unfolded at a mootings were: "Pakistan should use all her influence to persuade the rebel 'Azad Kashmir' forces (the name given to the strip of Kashmir still controlled by Pakistan) to withdraw from Kashmir territory as quickly as possible and to prevent further incursions. India should withdraw the bulk of her forces, leaving only small detachments of minimum strength to deal with disturbances. The United Nations Organization should be asked to send a commission to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir and to recommend to India, Pakistan and Kashmir, before it was held, steps which should be taken to ensure that it was fair and unfettered."

It is possible that a plebiscite would have taken place at any time before 1954 if both Dominions had acted on what they had accepted. But neither India did nor—as confirmed repeatedly by U.N. observers and commissions—Pakistan. The latter failed to withdraw her forces—for a time even denied that she had sent in any, until confronted by the U.N. with its own independent evidence; and India became increasingly reluctant to face a plebiscite until in 1954 she was able to complain—rightly—that with Pakistan now a full member of SEATO and CENTO the whole issue had become a pawn in the cold war game.<sup>1</sup>

Three years later India's stand changed further; Kashmir's accession to India, she declared, was legal, and there was nothing more to be said about it. From then on she began regarding any discussion on the affairs of Kashmir or the State's relations with India to be an interference in her domestic affairs; the only thing she showed any willingness to discuss was the original complaint she had brought to the U.N.: Pakistan's aggression against India and ways of terminating it, if possible without further war. In that complaint there was no reference to a plebiscite and even less to a U.N. supervision thereof. India's only commitment, repeated in a White Paper in March 1948, was a domestic one: to hold a plebiscite and a preparation thereof to start withdrawing her forces as soon as the raiders withdrew. Since the latter never happened, the commitment, she claimed, lapsed when the external circumstance changed.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 141.

Attitudes and motivations have hardened over the years, giving to the dispute its now notorious rigidity. But the main disagreements had been well-established before the forties ended, and it was obvious even then that they would be very durable. The very status of the accession was disputed in the first place; India believed that it was legally valid, Pakistan that it was a fraud. On the strict letter of the law India is undoubtedly right—in the face of the tribal invasion from Pakistan the Maharaja quite clearly asked for accession, exercising the unfettered discretion which had been vested in the Princes by the Indian Independence Act. Had Pakistan been more sure of its grounds in disputing the *legality* of the accession it would have jumped at the veiled offer India made at one time to let the judicial aspects of the dispute—not the political—go before a tribunal.

By implication the Act had limited the discretion in two ways. First, a state should accede only to a contiguous Dominion, which India is to Kashmir as much as Pakistan is, though over routes which were rather primitive in the forties. Hence India's opposition to any links between Pakistan on the one hand and Hyderabad or Travancore on the other, since Pakistan is not contiguous to either of the two states. The second limitation was that the decision of the ruler should not be in defiance of the wishes of the people; hence neither Hyderabad nor Junagadh could have acceded to Pakistan because the population of both was overwhelmingly pro-Indian. But Kashmir's case is not so clear cut in this sense.

In the first place, religion is a complicating factor. Pakistan and much of the rest of the world have argued that India was partitioned on the basis of religion; therefore Kashmir, a Muslim area contiguous to Pakistan, should accede to that Dominion. But India has vehemently rejected this view. In all the negotiations which preceded partition, conscious of the fact that any line of partition would leave something like 50 million Muslims on the Indian side, India totally refused to accept religion as the *raison d'être* of a nation state; had she not she would have had to regard her own Muslims as aliens. She would only accept the right of territorial self-determination; the people of the areas on the borders of the two Dominions—and in the case of states, the rulers—had the right, she agreed,



to opt for either Dominion regardless of their religion. But regardless of India's interpretation of partition, the fact remains that all Hindu-majority areas along India's border are in India, all Muslim majority areas are in Pakistan. The only exception is Kashmir, or rather that part of Kashmir which is known as the Valley, and the world has found it simpler to understand the rule rather than the exception.

Secondly, India herself did not hesitate in using the argument of religion in handling some of the states. An outstanding example is Jodhpur, one of the major states of Rajasthan, ruled and populated by Hindus, contiguous to both India and Pakistan. In July 1947, the Maharaja of Jodhpur and some neighbouring Princes, who were similarly situated, wavered in making their choice; the former even started some negotiations with Jinnah. Towards the end of July, V. P. Menon took the Maharaja of Jodhpur to see Mountbatten, and this is Menon's own account<sup>1</sup> of the conversation: "Lord Mountbatten made it clear that from a purely legal standpoint there was no objection to the ruler of Jodhpur acceding to Pakistan; but the Maharaja should, he stressed, consider seriously the consequences of his doing so, having regard to the fact that he himself was a Hindu; that his state was populated predominantly by Hindus and that the same applied to states surrounding Jodhpur. In the light of these considerations, if the Maharaja was to accede to Pakistan, his action would surely be in conflict with the principle underlying the partition of India on the basis of Muslim and non-Muslim majority areas; and serious communal trouble inside the state would be the inevitable consequence of such affiliation."

The core of the dispute, and also its most obscure part, is whether the wishes of the Valley are in fact what the world infers them to be from the religion of the people. From evidence which is clear even if unverifiable, it can be seen that they are not determined solely by religion. The religion of the Valley has always been Islam, but the preference of the people has swung violently from one Dominion to the other. But conclusive evidence of the swing, even if it were available, would only complicate the issue further instead of resolving it. The highly intricate issue would at once be raised, in fact it has been,

<sup>1</sup> *The Integration of Indian States.*

whether the Indian Constitution allows or the Indian political structure can afford to allow the right of secession to her people once they become part of the Indian Union.

There is very little doubt that India had widespread support among the people, more particularly of the Valley, at the time of and for some years after Kashmir's accession. There were several reasons for this. There is deep and traditional antipathy between the Kashmiris of the Valley and the tribesmen of the adjoining hilly areas of Pakistan; this flared up into active hatred when the tribesmen became the ruthless, almost barbarous spearhead of the attack from Pakistan. Secondly, the dominant political movement in the Valley, with its noticeably Marxist undertones, was for popular rule—and against the absolute monarchy, in many ways capricious and heartless, of Maharaja Hari Singh, the ruler. As such the movement would have had strong links with the Congress in any case. But it was being strongly encouraged and supported by the All-India States' Peoples' Conference which was working under Nehru's guidance for democratic regimes in all states. The unquestioned leader of the movement and the only authentic popular voice was Sheikh Abdullah, whom the Pakistan Prime Minister chose to describe as a Quisling. The Muslim League had tried to set up a splinter movement of its own, but until the early 'fifties at any rate it represented only a handful of people.

Sheikh Abdullah's antipathy for Pakistan was, if anything, even stronger than his sympathy for India, which was both personal and ideological. He and Nehru were close friends and colleagues. At the height of intricate and crucial negotiations in New Delhi, in June 1946, Nehru started off for Kashmir when he heard that the Maharaja had arrested the Sheikh; at the borders of the state Nehru himself was arrested. The theocratic concepts of Pakistan were anathema to the Sheikh whose faith in secularism was as strong as Nehru's. When Nehru made it a condition for accepting the accession of Kashmir that a popular government must be set up under Sheikh Abdullah, India's stock in the Valley rocketed skywards. The National Conference, which had conducted the popular movement under Abdullah's leadership, passed a resolution that "Kashmir's political, cultural and economic advancement depended upon a close political link with India".

Upon forming his first popular government in March 1948 — he had earlier formed an emergency administration — Abdullah declared India and Kashmir were tied together by history and culture, and any course other than accession to India would have been "absurd". He dismissed the idea of an independent Kashmir as "theoretical, academic and meaningless". Abdullah's own stand continued to be this for a few years longer (though possibly the same cannot be said of the views of the people). In 1951, when the Pakistan Prime Minister declined to go to London for a conference of Commonwealth Premiers unless it was agreed in advance that Kashmir would be discussed, Sheikh Abdullah said in a sarcastic public statement that "the answer to the Kashmir problem lay in Kashmir, not in London". "A fair solution cannot be found", he declared, "until the aggressor forces of Pakistan are driven off from the Kashmir soil." Voting "without outside interference the people of Kashmir will ratify the decision of the National Conference of Kashmir to merge with India".

India's popularity with Abdullah during this phase best explains Pakistan's reluctance, confirmed in several U.N. documents of this period, in implementing its commitments to the United Nations. It needed time to recover from the unpopularity incurred for it by the tribal invaders, and to bring the Muslims' sentiment sufficiently into play; it gained time by not withdrawing its forces, which was the first step in the sequence prescribed by the U.N. for leading up to a plebiscite.

Abdullah in the seat of power became so arbitrary and capricious that he became a liability; as his regime's reputation for corruption spread, India's stock declined as the power behind the throne. Secondly, from the time the Janna Sangh was founded, doubts began to raise their head in Srinagar that perhaps India would not remain quite secular after Nehru. The doubts had an immediate relevance for Kashmir: one of the most active state-level units of the Janna Sangh was in Jammu, the predominantly Hindu region of the state, where it received the support of Dogra organizations which were fairly strong and had always had an anti-Muslim bias. And, thirdly, as the debate in the U.N. dragged on year after year, and especially when Big Power politics began its play, many Kashmiris began to wonder whether the accession to India would last; this

uncertainty, apart from religious sentiment, is the reason more than anything else why the eyes of Kashmiris began to wander from New Delhi.

But whatever the reasons the phenomenon was unmistakable that India's chances of winning a plebiscite, and the willingness to face it, dwindled very rapidly from about 1952 onwards. Other reasons for the unwillingness, such as Pakistan's membership of the Pacts, are secondary. New Delhi's jurisdiction over Kashmir was extended step by step, until by 1965 the special status accorded to the state in the Indian Constitution, in deference to the conditions India herself had placed on the accession, virtually disappeared. The real reason for India's unwillingness to have a plebiscite now stands out in all simplicity: her deep conviction, which is probably correct, that a multi-racial, multi-religious federal structure cannot stand the risk; a breakway process, once begun at the periphery, might not stop there. In other words she is doing in the conditions of the mid-twentieth century what in the more permissive stages of history many countries have done, conspicuously the United States and the Soviet Union, in the course of their evolution from a patchwork of nationalities and a jumble of statehoods to well-established and consolidated nation-states. Her trouble is that since she does not have the power to back it with, she hesitates to give the frank answer that either she must hold on to what she has or perish.

## CHAPTER 4

### A WAR OF SUCCESSION

EXACTLY twenty-one years after the Congress declared complete independence to be its goal, India declared herself "a sovereign democratic Republic" on January 26, 1950. Except that it marked an important anniversary, the date appeared at that time to be an arbitrary choice. But in retrospect it marks a divide, vaguely defined but of some significance, between two different phases of the evolution of independent India.

Somewhere around 1950, a phase tapered off to an end in which India's main problems were not truly Indian in character because India had not yet emerged sufficiently to define her own problems. They were inherited problems, inherited from British rule, from the manner and timing of Britain's departure, from the fact and consequences of partition. They were penetrating and sharp splinters of the omnibus question the historians had raised: can there be such a thing as an independent India; will independence only mean lifting the lid from such a host of problems that they would shatter India into a host of countries? They were in a real sense the problems of a nation trying to come into being and ensure no more than its survival.

In the second phase the parent problem has been how to achieve national viability. Of course the two problems can coincide; the failure to achieve viability can be so total, or in particular areas so critical, that even survival as a nation becomes a hopeless ambition. But through most of the past seventeen years India's struggle has been, with aspects of viability, important aspects but less elemental than the issue of survival: what kind of foreign policy is best suited to India's interests; will India still be democratic ten years hence or will totalitarian philosophies of the Right or Left or the man on the horse take her over; will the liberal secularity of present policies remain; will the weight of India's poverty ever become lighter, and will free enterprise do that quicker or some form of socialism; what will happen to relations between the Centre and the States when

the whole country is no longer ruled by a single party; how soon and how far will the customary strains of federalism develop; how severe will be the future conflicts between languages, castes, regions and religions; will they damage, and if so how far, the gradually evolving theme of democratic socialism, with its centralising influence upon the economy and politics. Subject to doubts expressed in the last chapter of the book, this has been the shape of Indian anxieties since the early 'fifties—still a formidable shape but not such a frightening one as of the problems in the germinal stage before 1950.

Like all generalizations about the country, this also has large gaps in it. Not all the problems of viability began after 1950, and some of the problems which began then were as basic to survival as those encountered earlier. But broadly the start of the decade of the 'fifties does divide the problems of winning independence from those of retaining it; from keeping India together to those of making it strong; from building the ship to state to those of launching it, charting its course on the unfamiliar waters of freedom, trimming its sails to the winds of the rising and diverse expectations of the Indian people themselves and the rapidly shifting balance of international power. interesting themes in the first two or three years of the 1950's And, to keep this last metaphor going a little longer, the most were who would be the man at the helm of affairs, what kind of a man would he be by his nature; what would he prefer as his ultimate destination; by what symbols in the sky would he set his course; what would be his reading of the prevailing winds; how would he adjust himself to the international and national currents.

Even before the unexpected death of Mahatma Gandhi, it had been obvious for some time that the two men to watch were Nehru and Patel. The six months of independence before his death made it clearer still that as the tasks of the Congress changed from running a movement to running the government, it was these two people who would matter most, though the race between them might well be decided by his patronage and support. That there was a race between them they could not conceal from each other or the country, and their outlooks were so different that disagreements between them, if not clashes, were frequent; each disagreement became a further

proof of the race in the eyes of the people.

The background to the race and the key to its outcome lay in the highly complex and rapidly evolving relationship between Gandhi and Nehru. From few of his colleagues did Gandhi differ as much as from Nehru; yet few came as near each other as these two in their emotional comprehension of each other, and in their understanding of the enormously important fact that each of them in his own way represented a synthesis of Indian values as no third Indian leader did.

That the relations between them would be complex became obvious almost as soon as Nehru plunged into politics after his return from England, where he was brought up more in western learning than Indian. Late in 1927 Nehru dug in his heels for complete independence when the Congress was still committed only to self-rule. Early in 1928 Gandhi wrote to Nehru: "I feel that you love me too well to resent what I am about to write. In any case I love you too well to restrain my pen when I feel I must write. You are going too fast. You should have taken time to think and become acclimatised. . . . If after careful observation of the country in the light of your European experiences you are convinced of the error of current ways and means, by all means enforce your own views, but please form a disciplined party."

If this looked like an incipient split, much more was to follow within a few weeks, when Gandhi wrote: "I see quite clearly that you must carry on open warfare against me and my views. . . . The differences between you and me appear to be so vast and so radical that there seems to be no meeting ground between us. I cannot conceal from you my grief that I should lose a comrade so valiant, so faithful, so able and so honest, as you have always been." Gandhi constantly referred to the Englishness of Nehru, especially when, as during the first three years of the Second World War, Nehru wanted Gandhi's concern with national affairs to be tempered with Nehru's own for the international also. During one surge of differences Gandhi again wrote to Nehru, in 1939: "Differences in outlook between us are becoming most marked."

And yet what were these differences, which simultaneously carried the triple stamp of the relations between a father and son, mentor and pupil and the exponents of divergent political

beliefs and behaviour. It is these differences that show that Gandhi and Nehru were not always on opposite sides when the choice lay between moderation and intrepid campaign; sometimes it was Gandhi who became the implacable man of uncompromising action and Nehru the counsellor on behalf of more caution. In fact more often was it the case that Gandhi took charge of the Congress when the time was ripe for a campaign of mass action and Nehru when negotiations and temporising became the more appropriate tactics. Nehru readily acknowledged the difference when he said of Gandhi, very early on in their association, that "Gandhi, a typical product of India, represents the very anti-thesis of quietism. He has been a demon of energy and action, a hustler, and a man who not only drives himself but drives others. He has done more than anyone I know to fight and change the quietism of the Indian people".

In their temperament and social values the two leaders could not have been more disparate, and no matter how deep the anguish which their disagreements caused them and how beautiful the language in which they expressed it, they could do nothing to close the gap between them. "Nehru had little sympathy with the fasts and the spinning wheel, the romantic rusticity and the aura of religion with which Gandhi surrounded his daily life, public or private. Even towards non-violence Nehru's attitude was quite pragmatic; for Gandhi it was the fountainhead of his philosophy, for Nehru the weapon best suited to India's struggle. "Non-violence is no infallible creed with me," Nehru wrote, "and although I greatly prefer it to violence, I prefer freedom with violence to subjection with non-violence."

He was vehement in opposing the view Gandhi had held since 1909, with only some adjustment to the march of time, that "India's salvation lies in unlearning what she has learnt during the last fifty years. The railways, telegraphs, hospitals, lawyers, doctors such like all have to go; and the so-called upper classes have to learn consciously, religiously and deliberately to live the simple peasant life, knowing it to be a life giving true happiness". To the intensely modern man that Nehru was, all this was poison, and he was scathing in his criticism. "I dislike the praise of poverty and suffering. I do not



think that they are at all desirable, and they ought to be abolished. Nor do I appreciate the ascetic life as a social ideal, though it may suit individuals.... Nor do I appreciate in the least the idealisation of the simple peasant life. I have almost a horror of it.... Far from this life giving me true happiness, it would be almost as bad as imprisonment for me." To Gandhi's slogan that "people will have to live in villages, not towns", Nehru's answer, which he repeated almost on the eve of independence, was: "A village, normally speaking, is backward intellectually and culturally, and no progress can be made from a backward environment. Narrow-minded people are much more likely to be untruthful and violent." Giving a foretaste of what was to be his passion as Prime Minister, he wrote to Gandhi in 1945: "I do not think it is possible for India to be really independent unless she is a technically advanced country."

It is not that Nehru was insensitive to the Indian tradition or did not appreciate it; a man with such a well-developed sense of history could not be guilty of that. Interspersed throughout his voluminous writings there are passages which reflect his feeling for the past and his deep admiration for what was best in the beliefs, customs and institutions of India. As for the fascination which the mystery of India had for him, he wrote about it with rare beauty in his last will and testament. It is just that the India he admired was not wrapped up in the superstitions and the hocus-pocus of religion. "I have no faith in or use for the ways of magic and religion."

Yet the bonds between Gandhi and Nehru, more of emotions than beliefs, closer to love than affection, proved far stronger than their differences; the final summary of their life-long relations remained as Gandhi described it in 1936: "If in the joint work for reaching the goal we at times seem to be taking different routes. I hope the world will find that we had lost sight of each other only for the moment and only to meet again with greater mutual attraction and affection." Despite disagreements about tactics each had a keen, if rather intuitive appreciation of how valuable the other was to himself and to the country.

Writing before the death of Gandhi had erased from Nehru's mind all memory of what he thought wrong in Gandhi, writing in fact soon after the 1942 Quit India movement by Gandhi

about the wisdom of which Nehru had strong mental reservations, Nehru wrote, in *Discovery of India*, that "I have been attracted by Gandhiji's stress on right means, and I think one of his greatest contributions to our public life has been this emphasis. . . . He was like a powerful current of fresh air . . . a beam of life . . . a whirlwind. He did not descend from the top ; he seemed to emerge from the millions of India, speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them. . . . Gandhi was always there as a symbol of truth to pull us up and shame us into truth. . . . Gandhi was an odd kind of pacifist, for he was an activist full of dynamic energy. There was no submission in him to fate or anything that he considered evil ; he was full of resistance, though this was peaceful and courteous."

Similarly Gandhi considered Nehru to be a leader of inestimable value to himself and India ; nearly twenty years before independence came, in supporting Nehru's candidacy for becoming President of the Congress, Gandhi said in 1929: "Those who know the relations which subsist between Jawaharlal and me know that his being in the chair is as good as my being in it."

Knowing Nehru to be indispensable as the only magnet which could hold India together and transmit to it some of his own elemental energy ; admiring him as someone who was at once the product and the creator of the synthesis of the best in the old and the new India, its past and future ; and respecting him for his high standards of personal as well as public integrity, his strong humanism and deep, abiding attachment to secularism—qualities which Gandhi and Nehru shared more than any contemporary or subsequent Indian leader—holding Nehru more dear to him than anyone else for these reasons, Gandhi pronounced Nehru to be his successor, and worked for his success in a series of battles which were but the opening rounds of the war of succession. There had been less definite reference in the past to his preference for Nehru. In 1934 he had described Nehru as "the natural helmsman of the Congress". But a few months before the Quit India movement, Gandhi categorically declared: "I have said for some years and say now that . . . Jawaharlal will be my successor. And I know this that when I am gone he will speak my language."

Gandhi's motives in supporting Nehru were never entirely

unmixed, as he showed in the very first contest between Nehru and Patel for presidentship of the Congress. Gandhi supported Nehru and got him elected but the reason was not only the one which he gave, that he wanted a younger President; he wished to place the burden of responsibility upon Nehru's flights into Leftist ideology which were rather marked at that time. He also wanted to make sure that the Left-looking youth, whom Gandhi wanted very much to draw into the softening folds of the party, would be attracted into the Congress by Nehru. In both respects he proved uncannily right.

Seven years later, Gandhi again backed Nehru for the twin reasons that next to himself he was really the only man of the masses in the party, and he alone could hold the right and left wings together which were again drifting dangerously apart. Six of the most prominent members of Nehru's Working Committee, which meant virtually the entire Old Guard, including Patel, resigned in protest against Nehru's socialistic speeches; Nehru, in a counter-move, put in his own resignation too. But the dispute, as so often before, was smoothed over by Gandhi persuading the Old Guard to relent; Nehru's own devotion to party unity did the rest. In a contest for the Congress presidentship which followed, Gandhi again persuaded Patel to withdraw and Nehru, as President for yet another term, went and proved the decision to be absolutely right: if the Congress swept the polls in the elections in 1937, the first popular elections in India ever, half the achievement was Nehru's; he created a storm of support wherever he went in his 50,000-mile five-month tour of the country.

In just over a year, in November 1939, events proved how wisely Gandhi had invested by supporting Nehru against the Old Guard; he was now able to use Nehru in warding off the biggest assault young radicals have ever succeeded in making upon the party Establishment. In that month the Congress met at Tripura to elect a new President and, to the dismay of the older generation found itself facing a determined challenge from Subhas Chandra Bose, by now as much the idol of the youth as Nehru, if not more, and twice as ardent a radical.

Despite the declared opposition of Gandhi and all the other familiar older faces in the party, Bose won, though by a narrow margin. In the succeeding weeks the Establishment used all

the tricks it knew to squeeze out Bose and with Nehru's tacit support made the position so untenable for Bose that he had to resign. If Nehru had stood with Bose, as all the younger party members wanted him to, the two could have transformed the party from a conservative-minded bandwaggon, or at most a mindless middle-of-the-road mass led by a conservative Establishment, to a well-knit leftist party of radical action. But Nehru neither stood with Bose nor was genuinely neutral; his tactics helped Gandhi and Patel in overthrowing Bose.

However, the real threat to Nehru was still to come, and as might have been expected, it came from the right, not left, and more particularly from Patel; it matured for years, waited for the death of Gandhi, and then engaged Nehru on all fronts, forcing him to put forth all his resources, including a cunning and ruthlessness never seen in him before or since. When it ended it left Nehru clearly out in front, as the man of the decade; but while it lasted it was hard to say who would win.

The antithesis between Nehru and Patel was so total, its public exhibition so frequent, that no one could hope for more than a working arrangement between them, an acceptance by each of the other's supremacy in a demarcated area. This was possible so long as the issues between them were few and more or less self-contained; that, and the repeated mediation by Gandhi, had kept the tension between them from exploding. Patel was autonomous in the integration of states, Nehru in handling relations with Pakistan, including the war in Kashmir. Nehru grumbled that too much was being guaranteed to the Princes, Patel that India was being too soft with Pakistan by halting the Indian army at the moment of its victory in Kashmir and not allowing West Bengal Hindus to retaliate against the decimation of the Hindus in East Pakistan. But each kept his dissatisfactions more or less to himself.

But once the immediate crises were over and Nehru began to develop his philosophy of government, his differences with Patel flared up into a feud. On the one hand there was no Gandhi now to damp the fires, on the other ambition took a hand in fanning them, and it became obvious that there was not going to be room enough in the government for two equals. Nehru was secular, Patel a barely concealed Communalist; Nehru wanted to modernise Hindu society and tried a bold

beginning with the Hindu Code Bill, Patel was a traditionalist and joined hands with the numerous and determined opponents of the Bill; Nehru's thinking was a socialist's, Patel's much closer to the world of business and money; there was not time enough for foreign policy differences to develop, but if they had Patel would probably have pitted a clear alignment with the West against Nehru's non-alignment and certainly would not have gone along with the courtship of China.

Overhanging these differences were the levers of power: however great Nehru's popularity with the people the party machine was firmly in the hands of Patel. Therefore colleagues in the Cabinet had little hesitation in openly disagreeing with Nehru: John Mathai, the Finance Minister, resigned in protest against "too much planning", S. P. Mookerjee and K. C. Neogy because they did not like a pact Nehru signed with Liaquat Ali Khan for the protection of minorities in the two countries. Patel had probably little to do with these resignations—or with that of the first Finance Minister, Sir Shanmukham Chetty, in 1948; he went because he was suspected, wrongly as it turned out, of shielding some monied tax-evaders—but people saw in them the ominous makings of a showdown. To them it appeared that the expulsion of the Socialists from the Congress, largely the work of Patel—he gave them an ultimatum either to break up their group organization within the Congress or quit—was all part of a pattern. The haste with which the RSS was rehabilitated while Nehru was on a tour abroad seemed also to be evidence that Patel was sharpening his weapons. (In contrast the ban on the Communist Party remained for another two years or more despite the approaching elections, held in 1951-52) There was thus reason to suspect that the Sardar had isolated Nehru and was now moving in for the kill. Patel chose his time, weapon and arena with care.

In the summer of 1950 Nehru's fortunes were at a lower ebb than at any time except the last eighteen months of his life; relatively to Patel's they were particularly low. His main protector in the party, Gandhi, was dead. His stewardship of the government seemed far from stable: within three years four senior Cabinet ministers had resigned and with a fifth a hot controversy was going on which was to lead to his resignation only a few months hence. Nehru was to be proved right and

they wrong in later years, but as Prime Minister he was blamed for shaky stewardship. His "softness" towards Pakistan and the minorities at home were still unpopular. The debates in the Security Council, which he was blamed for inviting, were not going well. His commitment to sweeping reform of Hindu law had ranged the traditionalists—much stronger than today—against him. Those whom his socialist leanings would have pleased had been pushed out of the Congress. His last successful mass contact with the people was a thing of the past, the next was still more than a year ahead.

On the other hand Patel's mastery of the party machine was now total. Such blame as was his for the death of Gandhi had been forgotten by the people, who had been aided in forgetting it by the still rising resentment of the refugees; the integration of states still stood out as a shining monument to his ability, especially of the stern kind which people thought would deliver them from disorders faster than what Nehru was best known for: his liberalism and deep love of democracy. The forces of orthodoxy and money stood entirely on Patel's side, reinforced by the integration of princely India where some of the stronger Hindu monarchies had always been the rallying points of economic conservatism and feudalistic social values.

The arena was to be the election of a party President for 1951, the weapon Purshotamdas Tandon, the most venerable of the party's orthodox leaders, untouched by anything more modern than the spinning wheel, uncorrupted by any of the minor vices of politics, opposed to everything which was not sanctified by Sanskrit or sanctioned by the scriptures. In his dedicated and revivalist Hinduism there was no room for secularism and no eagerness for improved relations with Pakistan. His only concern was how to abolish the twentieth century. All the precepts of orthodoxy were made examples by his life; they came to sharp focus in his patriarchal appearance. These were reasons enough for Nehru to be concerned over the prospect of Tandon becoming the party President; but he had another reason too: Tandon believed that the party was superior to the government and custodian of the latter's policies.

The opposing candidate was Kripalani, no comrade of Nehru and as convinced as Tandon that the reigns of the country should be in the hands of the party. But he was far more

acceptable to Nehru, and though at one time he had sided with the conservatives of the party against Nehru, his economic and social values were not an obscurantist's. Nehru therefore favoured his candidature—not as vigorously as Patel favoured Tandon's, but sufficiently for it to become obvious to everyone that the contest was really between Nehru and Patel.

At the Congress session, at Nasik, where the election was to be held, Nehru proved again to be the star attraction for the crowds, far more than Patel. But Tandon was elected President by a narrow margin. Patel at once moved on to the next stage of the attack: while the less immediate parts of Nehru's policies were endorsed in a policy resolution being debated at Nasik, a major amendment was moved against his concept of a regulated economy. The amendment was defeated but by a narrow margin. Both votes proved that the party was split right down the middle and Nehru, as always in the past, backed down in the interests of party unity, at least for the time being. He even persuaded Kripalani to dissolve a left faction, the Democratic Front, he was trying to organize among the ranks.

Tension continued to run high, and even in retrospect it is not easy to say where it would have led the party and the country. But at the end of 1950 Sardar Patel died and the principal challenge to Nehru was extinguished. The right faction continued to harass Nehru but from now on was led only by the obstinate Tandon, not the determined and skilful Patel. Nehru's attempts to have some of his own men in the party executive were rebuffed, an effort to retain two of them—one a Muslim—in his Cabinet as non-party men brought him a sharp rap on the knuckles from Tandon, and his position in the Congress became so untenable that he was obliged to take the most drastic political step in his career.

He discarded his over-riding attachment to party unity and resigned from the two top-most committees of the Congress on August 10, 1951. This sent such a shock through the country that Tandon offered to resign if Nehru would stay, but having sensed the moment Nehru refused to budge. On the other hand a day later Maulana Azad, Nehru's closest ally in these committees, also followed him out. Ten days later the Congress Party in Parliament, firing its first shot in a tussle with the non-parliamentary wing of the party which was to last nearly fifteen

years,\* gave Nehru an overwhelming vote of confidence. This forced the hands of Tandon and his committee, and all of them had to put in their own resignations, leaving Nehru master of both wings after a dramatic test of wills. Nehru became Congress President in addition to being Prime Minister. Patel's death would have left him the undisputed leader in any case; but he became the only leader thanks to the obstinate and unwise challenge thrown at him by Tandon.

Thus the decade of one man's dominance began, and as though to underline the meaning, Nehru decided not to fill the post of Deputy Prime Minister which Patel had held till his death. A designated deputy would have deflated the question which ten or twelve years later was to hover over the country like a spectre—After Nehru Who?—but in the meantime he could have become a visible alternative as a focus of power, and Nehru did not want that. He displayed the same preference for undiluted pre-eminence in 1962 when a serious demand boiled over that the Congress Party in Parliament should name a designated Deputy Leader and the more ambitious among his senior colleagues, especially Morarji Desai and Jagjivan Ram, began to flex their muscles for a contest. Nehru quietly split the job into two, one Deputy Leader for each of the two Houses of Parliament, drained all significance out of the designation, and left the divided jobs fit only for quite junior M.Ps. As for the other main office which the Congress had to offer anyone, of the party President, Nehru held it for four years himself and then passed it on to a nominee of his own choice, the dedicated and colourless U. N. Dhebar.

If Nehru needed anything more to establish his total ascendancy, the elections of 1951-52 provided it: he not only repeated but excelled his performance in all the earlier campaigns and at the end of it left no one in any doubt that whether he could have dispensed with the Congress or not the Congress certainly could not dispense with him. He was not only the greatest formulator of its attitudes but also its most effective vote catcher and next only to Gandhi its closest contact with

\* In fact it has only slumbered in the past year or two, waiting for opportunities to flare up again, as it did in the 1967 elections and caused a deep rift between the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, and the Congress President, Mr. Kamaraj.



the people. These were the first elections to be held on adult franchise in India, which made this country the largest mass democracy in the world's history with an electorate of 177 million people—nearly six times the electorate in 1937 and larger than the total population of the United States at that time. Nearly 4,000 members had to be elected to various legislatures of the Union, and in a country where the radio and the microphone were still an innovation this meant a campaign by personal appearance such as no leader in any country had ever had to conduct at any time.

Only Nehru could have proved as equal to the task as he did: he framed the policy manifesto, chose the candidates, set the tone, roused the people to this mode of appointing their rulers and, at the age of 62, travelled more than 30,000 miles in less than a month and a half by all means of travel available in a country which still had one foot firmly planted in the age of the bullock cart and with the other was soaring into the age of aviation. Addressing sometimes as many as a dozen meetings a day he managed to be seen or heard by almost a fifth of the electorate, completing his own education about the country he was to rule and putting the country through its first lessons in his five-fold philosophy: democracy, socialism, secularism, non-alignment and a total commitment to the twentieth century.

As the course of the most effective years of his life, the next ten, was to show, none of these words was a dogma for him. On all of them he was flexible, on all he was willing to compromise for the sake of what was dearest to him, the unity of the country and the party. On some he was to carry compromise to the point of contradiction. But no one could have rubbed the amalgam of these notions, however modified and diluted, as deeply into the country's flesh and bones and the innermost consciousness as Nehru did; the beginning of the process was the election campaign he ran fifteen years ago.

## NEW IDOL AND IDEALS

## THE MAKING OF NEHRU

EVEN AS late in his life as 1917, when he was twenty-eight years old, Nehru showed no promise of greatness; far from it. His days at Harrow and Cambridge were quite undistinguished; there was plenty of affluent leisure, a veneer of sophistication, the refined but easy intellectualism of a dilettante; of any anguish for India or concern with the world or commitment to socialism there was little sign. And yet within ten years of his return to India he became a major force in the Congress, in twelve years the most illustrious single Congressman, bar only Mahatma Gandhi. In thirteen years he became the Congress President, at 40 one of the youngest ever to hold that office. By now he was the centre of so much acclaim, so adored by people as a dashing and impetuous young man—which everyone took him to be—such an eagerly awaited presence in every corner of India that in Madras a huge gathering heard him in silence as he harangued them in Hindi, a language which few in his audience understood. No one wanted even a translation; his voice and the chance to see him were enough.

Here was the charismatic leader, already full-blown, and in his own mind a thought of dangers arose to which he gave anonymous expression in 1937. In an article signed pseudonymously as Chanakya but largely attributed to him, he wrote of himself as a leader hailed by the populace and receiving their full-throated homage as his procession paraded past them: "He passed swiftly through the waiting crowds; his hands went up, and his pale hard face was lit up with a smile.... Watch him again.... Steadily and persistently he goes on increasing his prestige and influence.... From Far North to Cape Comorin he has gone like some triumphant Caesar, leaving a trail of legend and glory behind him.... Is it his will to power that is driving him from crowd to crowd..... What if the fancy turn? Men like Jawaharlal, with all their great capacity for

great and good work, are unsafe in a democracy... a little twist and he might turn into a dictator... he has all the makings of a dictator in him—vast popularity, a strong will, energy, pride... and with all his love of the crowd, an intolerance of others and a certain contempt for the weak and inefficient... His conceit is already formidable. It must be checked. We want no Caesars."

Many things saved Nehru and the country from incipient dictatorship, not the least among them being Nehru himself; his finest qualities and his greatest weaknesses which really were two sides of the same coin, made him as incapable of being a dictator as they made him the man most qualified to help democracy strike root. Not only was he a democrat by conviction; his mental make-up disqualified him for the role of a dictator. He was too much given to compromise, too averse to seeing things as black and white, too much at home in the grey area of each issue, too gentle with people and loyal to colleagues, to be as single-minded and ruthless as a dictator has to be. Even when he was riding the crest which was to make him Congress President a year later, he subordinated his own judgment to the Old Guard's and Gandhi's and signed a statement he did not like—a conditional offer by the Congress in 1929 to attend a Round Table Conference in London. Later he recorded in his Autobiography: "As was not unusual with me, I allowed myself to be talked into signing"; this was to become a constant footnote to his actions.

More positively, he was too deeply aware of the danger of schisms in a country so powerfully ridden by centrifugal forces to provoke one himself by dictatorial rigidities; almost to a fault, at times by sacrificing principles to a compromise, he tried to keep the Congress together because he believed that only the Congress could keep the country together. He saw in himself the meeting point, which in fact he was, of numerous loyalties which were otherwise divergent: old and orthodox Congressmen for whom he was always the nominee of Gandhi, and after Patel's death almost the only link with the past they had known; the left-leaning young intellectuals whose hope he had been since the late twenties and the only anchor after Subhas Bose took shelter with the Axis armies; the Gandhians, who were drawn to him by his high standards of personal con-

duct; the planners and socialists, the modern-minded technocrats, because he was as modern-minded as they and almost the only one among the old leaders who saw virtue in planning; the free-enterprisers because of his conviction that the country should be industrialized rapidly; the British-trained bureaucrats because he was even more an Englishman than they.

These were the lines of force that radiated from him. This was also the web in which he was caught: there was little he could say or do which would not disturb one section or another of the devotees around him. Hence the technique he followed, which he described as expressing his ideas "in the mildest way possible, and more as an invitation to thought than as fixed conclusions".

The Congress in particular he sought to guard against any wind that might split it. He forced it to be nothing more than what it became — a broad spectrum, covering all points of view, whatever the price in terms of the vagueness of policy and action. Right at the start of his career he had formed a Centre Party in the Congress; till the end of his days he remained tied down to the centre. This was to be a grave disappointment for those who had expected him to impart a revolutionary impulse to the country. But he had no doubt himself that unity was more important than powerful policies. In June 1963, almost to the day a year before his death, he was asked why there was no ideological cohesion in his Cabinet; his answer was a summary of his whole approach to ideologies: "India is a mixed country in many ways", and it would be harmful to "drive it in one particular direction".

He was not satisfied with this role himself. Often he found himself surrounded by colleagues, both in the party and in the Government, with whom he could not sympathise, and more than once he was to confess, as he did in 1936, that "I was completely isolated and there was not a single member to support me". Often he was to drag himself to the brink of resigning from the Government or the party and always he was to drag himself back with the same "mental conflict" and the same fear he expressed in 1936: "Our whole organisation might have been shaken up by it." Only once, in forcing Tandon to resign, he came close to being ruthless. But it did not last. Nehru accomplished little more than the dislodging of

Tandon. He retained virtually the whole of the party executive, though he had made his demand for its reconstitution the main issue. As for infusing loyalty to new ideals in the Congress, the exercise became comical when the All-India Congress Committee held its first meeting with the Prime Minister in the chair.

As *The Statesman* reported: "Having begun with a brief reference to his election as President, Mr. Nehru reverted to the subject at the close of his speech. He indicated that what he desired was something more than a show of hands to prove that he was wanted as President. A hush descended on the audience, followed immediately by consultations among members. When one of them asked Mr. Nehru what proof he wanted, the new President asked the Committee to shout "Jai Hind" (Hail India) with him. This was done, twice. "No communalists were weeded out or schisms precipitated. The Congress continued vaguely on its unifying way, Nehru on his of issuing "invitations to thought".

If in spite of that Nehru became the mould in which everything that was new to India began to set after independence—and such of the old as independence loosened out of the traditional moulds—there was a two-way reason for that. In the first place, of the three elements thrown together by independence—Nehru, the Congress and India—each was eminently suited to the other two, and needed them. The Congress needed a leader like Nehru, the country a party like the Congress; Nehru could have led only a party like the Congress; the Congress could have flourished only in a country like India. In the second place, Nehru's contact with the masses became an amalgam which held the three elements together in spite of all the upheavals they endured immediately before and after independence was won. It is somewhere in this two-part reason that the secret of India's survival lies, and of the durability of India's political institutions.

The rapport which Nehru established with people began its alchemy, for him and them, very early in Nehru's political life, in fact before his life had become political in any serious sense of the word. In 1920 a deputation of villagers came to Allahabad to enlist the sympathy of better known leaders than the young Nehru, but the latter accompanied them back to their villages, perhaps for his first real sight of rural India, and of his

experience he wrote later in *Towards Freedom*: "I was filled with shame and sorrow, shame at my own easygoing and comfortable life and our petty politics of the city which ignored this vast multitude of the semi-naked sons and daughters of India; sorrow at the overwhelming poverty and degradation of India. A new picture of India seemed to rise before me, naked, starving, crushed, and utterly miserable. And their faith in us, casual visitors from the distant city, embarrassed me and filled me with a new responsibility that frightened me."

He was to write often about his contact with the people: "I took to the crowd and the crowd took to me, and yet I never lost myself in it", "I am an exceedingly bad politician, and functioning in groups I cannot function properly. But I can function in the midst of 50,000 or 100,000 persons", "the functioning of democracy is very largely the sensation you create in the public mind", "I am particularly sensitive to public reactions, to mass reactions", "whenever I feel stale and tired, I go among the people and I come back refreshed"—but it was in that first encounter with the peasantry that, in a very real sense, his discovery of India started.

It is doubtful whether time, circumstances and personality will ever combine in India again to make a man such a magnate for the crowds as Nehru was, or the contact between him and the crowds as productive of an interchange of influences. Towards the end of Nehru's own life the magic had waned. But while it lasted it was one of the major influences which shaped him. It took him out of his earlier lack of commitment to a cause and freed him from the over-protective influence of his family, especially his father. To this contact with the palpable misery of the people more than any other single cause, Nehru owed his deep humanism and the concept and practice of democratic socialism which became his greatest contribution to Indian polity and the one by which he would most like to be remembered. Others had helped India as much as he in winning independence; India's unity certainly owes more to others. But Nehru was the chief architect—with the crowds of his nearest partners—of the central core of the governing philosophy of India in the first fifteen years since independence.

Ballot-box democracy and socialism through planning are incompatible by their pedigree. Democracy developed earliest

and most in countries where there was the minimum regulation of the economy: the first countries which proved that socialism could be viable where also the most innocent of democratic intention or practice. Therefore there was doubt, which was vigorously expressed, about the hybrid philosophy Nehru was evolving. Not only the extreme parties of the right and left expressed it but a broad spectrum of the Congress, led by the Old Guard,<sup>1</sup> the leadership which revolted against him in 1936 because "We felt that the preaching and emphasising of socialism particularly at this stage, by the President and Congress Socialist members of the Working Committee while the Congress has not adopted it is prejudicial to the best interests of the country and the success of the national struggle for freedom". Later protests came from within the government.

But Nehru was convinced, and he never tried of saying it, that socialism and democracy were not only compatible but in India's circumstances indispensable to each other. After years of isolation during which she had neither an industrialized economy nor a democratic government nor a socialist philosophy, India had suddenly emerged, after independence, into a world in which not only the industrial revolution had taken place but also the French and the Russian. Therefore the method of domestic and overseas exploitation by which the once underdeveloped nations of Western Europe had achieved rapid industrialization were not open to India even though she could import their techniques. The French and Russian revolutions, besides the political revolution through which India herself had passed, had released expectations among Indians which needed an economic revolution to satisfy them.

Thus was India exposed to an intolerable stretch: at one end she was tied to a pre-industrial, feudal economy and society; the other was being powerfully drawn into the revolution of rising expectations. Because of the distortion-making gap which the missing centuries had left, the old classifications had no relevance to India; she must evolve her own amalgam of beliefs.

The formula he preferred was democratic socialism with its twin agencies: the parliamentary system and central planning.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 62.

India could not afford the loss of time and resources involved in the *laissez-faire* philosophy of nineteenth century Europe: hence planning and some arranging of priorities. Communism, whatever it might have done in countries of its origin, had precluded exploitation of labour in other countries; hence socialism and the equal distribution of sacrifices. But to put through any kind of socialistic planning without the ruthlessness of Communism the government had to have the clear backing of the people: hence his tireless insistence upon democracy. He was deeply convinced that in India's circumstances, which his encounter with the peasant in 1920 had made a startling and dominating reality, a truly democratic system would be inevitably socialistic: hence his total insistence upon democratic methods and steady refusal to use his powers too much, though they could have been a great, if he had wished, as any dictators.

If India's circumstances required a democratic system, they also required that the form should be parliamentary, not presidential which in a still backward country can become, as it has in many, the rule of one man punctuated by elections. The best, no less than the worst, in Nehru, the Congress and the country made this inevitable. Nehru was a cross-section of the country in one man. No part of his mind could look at any problem for long without other parts making their own voices heard; he functioned within himself as the parties in Parliament.

For better or worse, Nehru's mind never ceased to be an inner forum. This remained for ever—and for obvious reasons—his weakness, but also his strength because thus he mirrored the party. By the time India became independent, the Congress had a history of fifty years behind it. Its mores and modes of behaviour were set, even the appearance of its leaders was so set, to the delight of the cartoonist, the caricaturist and its own publicists alike, that it was never difficult to identify a Congress leader in a group. But it had also become an inseparable part of the party's character that it was less a party than a movement, a national parliament from which all programmes and opinions emanated and in which they terminated. Its experience reached out to mass agitations on the one hand and to the functioning of legislatures and



governments on the other; even the terrorist movement was, to begin with, only an offshot. The springs of its power included the traditional Indian and more specifically Hindu values on the one hand and modern secular and socialist values on the other.

For all that it was dominated by a handful of personalities, it had become the medium for a great deal of vertical and horizontal osmosis in which there was place for all points of view, to the exclusion of none. Before independence its inclusiveness was a matter of choice: deliberately it drew within its fold anyone of whatever beliefs or status who subscribed, as all Indians did, to its sole ambition, independence. After that inclusiveness became a matter of habit, but such a deeply entrenched habit that it has never been able to shed multiplicity of voices. No decision emerges from it with suddenness or clarity; each is enveloped in what at its best is open debate and at its worst vacillation. Its ways of working are incorrigibly parliamentary, the resultant is *centersim* almost about everything.

Beyond the party the country added its own compulsions, reinforcing the choice in favour of democracy and parliament. Other countries have been compounded out of as many differences as India of all its many schisms there are examples in other countries. But India is unique in that she has been afflicted by all of them at the same time—language, religion, caste, region, classes—and when the country was so little prepared to face them. The general incohesiveness of the country and the primitiveness of the apparatus of communications makes it very difficult for any of the elements which constitute the country to achieve a unifying dominance over all the other elements.

In the second place, even if the apparatus were there the numbers would not be. No group is numerically so preponderant over the rest that in the course of time it should achieve a natural dominance. The Hindus as a religious group have a numerical preponderance, but in all other respects are as divided as the country is and find natural unification at least as different. Hence there is no Han to unify India as he unified China no Great Russian as in the Soviet Union, no Anglo-American as in the United States. On the other hand each local

and more especially regional element, whether racial, cultural or linguistic is strong and numerous enough to have at least visions of its independent viability. Particularly is this true of the linguistic classes, whose number justify Selig Harrison's general observation in *The Most Dangerous Decades*: "The peculiar balance of power in India pits nine significant territorial languages against a tenth (Hindi) which is sufficiently larger than any of them to assert a dominant position but not quite large enough to achieve it."

These difficulties made it as desirable as the characteristics of the Congress and its leader made it inevitable that India should try to spread a democratic, not a dictatorial umbrella over all its diversities; otherwise the result would have been a rash of uncontrollable rebellions. And for the same reason it became necessary and inevitable that the form of democracy should be parliamentary, not presidential. A one-man executive, even if democratically chosen and for a pre-determined period and surrounded by a system of checks and balances, would not have provided what Parliament has: a forum to draw all the disparate elements together to expose each to the convictions and prejudices of the other, so that from the continuous interplay between them a general approach should emerge, if not precisely a policy, which would have the broad support of the largest number of people. It has been India's great fortune that those in whose hands lay the power of decision not only did not try to oppose the inevitable but themselves were its most ardent admirers; more than willingly they took the democratic decision to share with others power which they could have kept exclusively in their own hands.

*A PLACE IN THE WORLD*

THE PARTITION left India's relations with Pakistan and Britain in an uncertain state, pregnant with far-reaching but unexplored possibilities. For instance, Jinnah hinted at one time that if the "essentials of Pakistan" were conceded he would agree to a customs union and common railways; after partition he thought the Governor-General could be common. Mountbatten and Nehru had vaguely talked of an association between Britain and India which would be closer than merely membership of the Commonwealth. But no soundings had been taken which would indicate how far these ideas had survived the tensions and blood-bath of partition.

The working arrangements arrived at with Pakistan looked surprisingly good—for a time. Before partition, a Partition Council had been set up, to share out India's assets between the two Dominions. Immediately after, an Arbitral Tribunal was formed to decide by award whatever the Council could not by agreement. To cope with the partition riots and to oversee division of the armed forces, a Joint Defence Council functioned from the end of 1947 to the summer of 1948, and in both respects functioned uncommonly well. One of the more conspicuous results was an agreement, signed in June 1948, to ensure protection for the rights of the minorities in the two Dominions; watchdog Commissions were formed in both to ensure implementation and in November 1950, Nehru certified that the agreement was working satisfactorily. He complimented both governments, which he said were working very hard "to give effect to it".

Various kinds of goodwill delegations were exchanged, including one consisting of leading editors which drew up a code for newspapers in both Dominions to discourage inflammatory writing and propaganda in each against the other. Trade and commerce, which neither Dominion wished to discourage and only the state of insecurity had dislocated for a time, began to pick up again. Large numbers of those who

had left their homes began to return: by the end of 1950 out of 1,800,000 Hindus who had left East Pakistan for two neighbouring states in eastern India, 1,200,000 had gone back; out of 705,000 Muslims who had migrated to East Pakistan from neighbouring States in India, 701,000 had come back.

In this state of returning cordiality, the Secretary-General of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs proposed to the Pakistan High Commissioner in New Delhi, Mr. Mohammed Ismail, that the two countries should jointly abjure the use of force for settling their differences, a decision which had to wait for 16 years and the Tashkent Declaration. Mr. Ismail consulted his government and conveyed consent, and at the same time listed four specific disputes—about canal waters, evacuee property, assets in banks, and undivided India's sterling assets—which the two countries should agree to settle by negotiations and, failing that, by mediation and arbitration. India then prepared a draft agreement and submitted it to Pakistan on December 22, 1949.

But when discussions and correspondence about the draft began, the yawning gap of Kashmir came up. India pointed out that while all technical and legal matters involving the normal problems of international relationships could be submitted to mediation, arbitration or judicial determination by the International Court, Kashmir was a political dispute involving an issue of sovereignty; as such it could not be submitted to decision by a third party but could be settled by mutual agreement. Pakistan declared, as it was to do repeatedly in the succeeding years, that abjuring the use of force would be meaningless and unacceptable unless a self-executing machinery for a decision on Kashmir was laid down, including arbitration if mediation failed. The exchange of letters became increasingly bitter, the negotiations broke down at the end of 1950, and whatever hope there might have been that the thread would be picked up again disappeared when in October 1951, Liaquat Ali Khan was murdered. (The murder, by a person described as a Pathan, has remained one of the great unsolved crimes of history because the Pakistan Government has unbudgingly refused to disclose the results of an investigation it carried out with the help of Scotland Yard) In the meantime the other possibilities Jinnah had suggested also disappeared.

The acrimony surrounding the failure of the talks for a no-war declaration became an ever-lengthening shadow across Indo-Pakistan relations, it brought even limited cooperation in specific non-political tasks to an end until the whole apparatus of partition councils and agreements collapsed. This much was expected, but what surprised India was its effect on Indo-British relations. Indian opinion found it easier to accept membership of the Commonwealth on account of the conviction, widely held then and since, that the Commonwealth was bound by its conventions not to intervene in or even discuss the domestic affairs of any member, and as a corollary not to go into disputes between members; therefore joining the Commonwealth would subtract nothing from India's sovereignty and independence. It would not make her a Dominion, a status which Nehru had often dismissed as unacceptable. It was therefore India's expectation, strengthened by Nehru's experience of the first few meetings he attended, that Kashmir would not be discussed at a Commonwealth conference.

But when Attlee called a conference in January 1951, Liaquat Ali Khan refused to attend because he saw "little point in attending unless the Commonwealth countries agree to collective consideration of the Kashmir issue". Otherwise, he said, he was "too busy to go to London on a holiday jaunt". Pakistan was being taken "too much for granted". Within three days he received a message from Attlee, and the next day a joint message from the conference itself, that the Prime Ministers were ready to have an informal discussion on Kashmir "with a view to reaching a settlement". Two days later Liaquat Ali left for London; and on January 9, all the Prime Ministers, including Nehru and Liaquat Ali, met at the bedside of Menzies of Australia who was ill, and discussed Kashmir. By the alchemy of procedure this was termed an informal discussion, but it was formal enough for a formal statement to ensue. The statement, as might have been expected, recorded no progress. But it was enough to raise doubts in India again whether after all she had been wise in agreeing to join the Commonwealth.

This was to be only the first and not the most violent eruption of similar misgivings in India. The latest, in the fall of 1965, was probably the worst; it nearly jerked India out of the Commonwealth. At that time however this looked like an

isolated unpleasantness, a temporary interruption in a candid relationship which Nehru inaugurated some months before independence. In January 1947 he addressed the Associated Chambers of Commerce in Calcutta, the first Indian ever to address this apex body of British business and commercial interests in India. Mixing frankness with a warm invitation to British interests to remain in India on terms of equality with Indians he said: "So far as our relationship with England is concerned—unless the break comes (a reference presumably to the approaching day of independence) in such a way as to poison the future—it will continue in hundreds of ways.... One thing is obvious, that very soon matters pertaining to India will be decided in India by Indians.... (But) there will be much room left over for private enterprise by Britishers and others. As a matter of fact they will have much more to do than at present... knowing full well that many of my countrymen will not say so, because they are for the moment full of the past legacy of conflict and hatred, I say that once we get over this matter, thinking more of the future than looking into the past... we can go along together."

Nehru need not have had any doubts about the minds of his countrymen. In December 1948 the Congress passed a resolution that although with independence India's relations with the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth would change, the Congress would welcome India's "free association with independent nations of the Commonwealth for their common weal and the peace of the world". A few months later the Constituent Assembly also adopted this view, with only one member voting against Britain, and the older Commonwealth countries were all so eager to welcome India into the club that in spite of the considerable legal contortions they had to go through, they found a way of admitting a sovereign and independent republic into an association presided over by a monarch. They dropped the word British and the requirement of allegiance to the Crown, and made the King symbolic Head of the Commonwealth. Even Churchill said in the House of Commons: "It is fortunate that the institution of monarchy... should not have been a barrier to the inclusion of India as a Republic in the Commonwealth." Of this he said he was "unfeignedly glad".

But Nehru had to do a far more intricate job of carpentry in preparing the framework of India's relations with the rest of the world. The timber was some of his own deepest convictions and the harsh realities of the post-war world. It is characteristic of the best and the worst in him that he first thought of the world scale of problems, not the specific differences India had with some of her neighbours which, through neglect, became more intractable as the years went by. Specifically the position of Indians overseas deteriorated while Nehru busied himself with resolving world tensions. It is not that he neglected the smaller neighbours, though this has been alleged. His visits to them were frequent, especially to those in South-East Asia. Nor was his approach lacking in warmth. But it was not at their level; each neighbour was not an individual entity to him but a part of the aggregates which formed his world view. He always appeared to them to be educating them in something which he understood but not they; it was not long before they began to chide him, and India, for a haughty sense of superiority, which only added to the difficulties of the Indian communities. They had plenty of ammunition to use against India.

Some of Nehru's pronouncements of this period have an egoism in them which was to look pathetic only a few years later. In January 1947, he said: "In the context of today India is very strong—politically, economically, and for purposes of trade. If I may put it crudely, India is in a strong bargaining position. She is geographically so situated that little can happen in the whole of South-East Asia without her concurrence, whether in the matter of trade or defence...." He told the Foreign Policy Association in New York in the fall of 1949: "India, in southern, western, and south-eastern Asia, has to play a distinctive and important role." Actually India played a forcing role only in one case: Nepal, where active Indian encouragement was behind the successful rebellion of the King against the oppressive tutelage of the barons. But even there, diligent cultivation of this advantage was so lacking that within a few years Nepal began to resent India's influence; it was not till 1963 when Shastri, already emerging at that time as the successor to Nehru, applied his gentler touch that Nepal's goodwill was won once more. India has neighbours in South-East Asia who have strong cultural affinities with her, especially Thailand,

Cambodia and Indonesia. But instead of these being an advantage, they became, in the general context of India's hopes of exercising hegemony, a source of much friction as these countries bristlingly repudiated any claim by India to be a cultural progenitor.

On the other hand Nehru showed deep understanding of the larger forces at work, both the power forces, that is the contest which was already developing between the Soviet Union and the United States, and the ideological forces, about which he said: "Asia today is becoming perhaps the most important centre of the various forces at play and in conflict, and much for Asia and the world will depend upon the interaction of these forces... these forces are a waning imperialism, a resurgent nationalism, Communism, and a vague but widespread demand for social justice."

His policy responses to these forces were not always of the best; at times they caused severe misunderstandings, especially in the United States. But even twenty years after he made his basic formulation for the first time—in September 1946, almost a year before he became Prime Minister, he said, as Member for External Affairs in the Viceroy's Executive Council, that "in this sphere of foreign affairs India will follow an independent policy, keeping away from the power blocs of groups aligned one against another"—it is difficult to see what other policy would have suited India better at that time or which other Indian statesmen could have designed it better. Similarly, while in detail he offended many Afro-Asians—especially in his excessive protestations that India did not wish to be a leader—in the broad outlines of his policy he was truly a progenitor; one Afro-Asian country after another absorbed his philosophy into its foreign policy whether it acknowledged this fact or not.

Like British statesmen, and like his immediate mentor, Gandhi, Nehru had a weakness for clothing necessity in the garb of moral principles. But he could recognize necessity quite clearly when he saw it, and the first necessity he saw, as independent India's first Foreign Minister, was the survival of India as a free country; anything which endangered survival or freedom, in that obvious order, had to be opposed—or, if essential for the time being, appeased. India was entering a world which had already been dangerously bi-polarised between two



fully developed power systems, and the chance of a conflict between them was far from remote: Churchill had already made his frightening pronouncement, that matters must be brought to a head with the Soviet Union "before they too have the atom bomb".

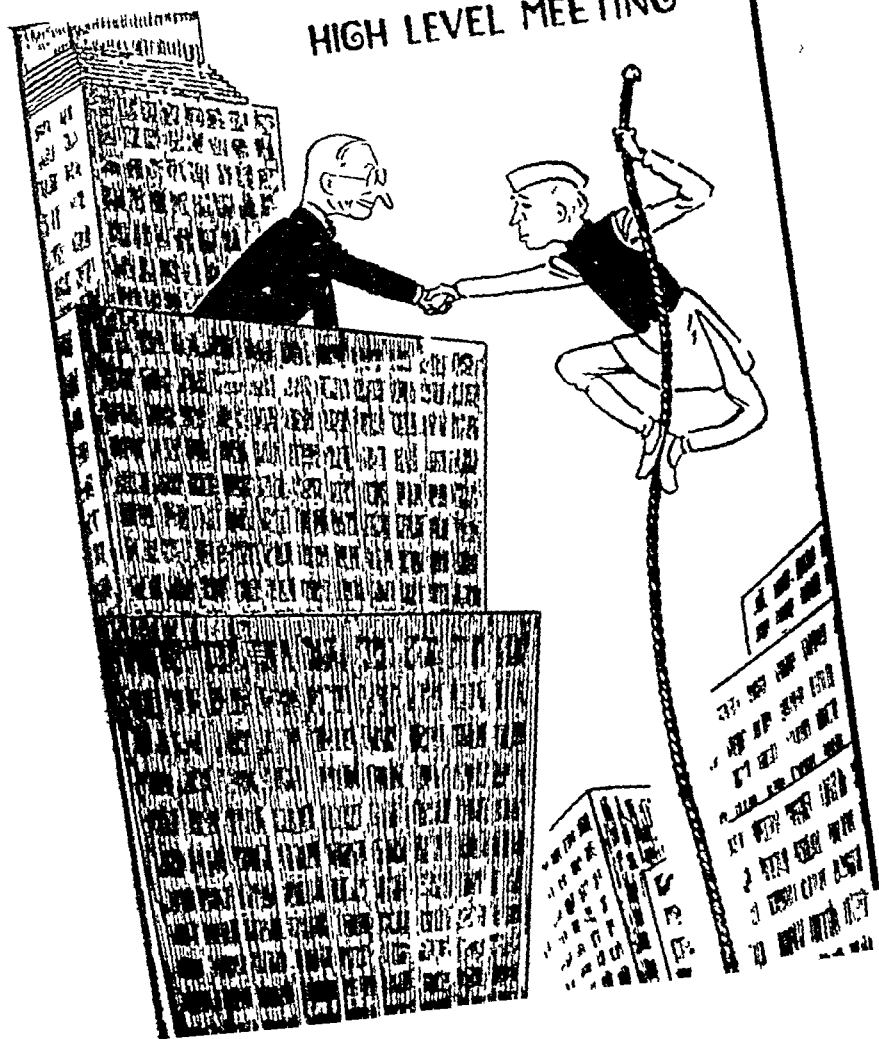
For India to join either of the power systems would have necessarily involved offending the other. If either had been palpably hostile to her the risk might have been worth taking; or if either had been overwhelmingly superior in strength safety might have rested in joining it. But such was not the case. The Soviet Union was distinctly unfriendly, but its threat was more political and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. American military power was probably greater than the Russian, but the latter made up for that by its greater proximity to India. Besides, Russia had at least the potential for creating trouble through its hold over India's domestic Communists. Of this Nehru had been aware for a long time; he wrote in 1927: "Russia again cannot be ignored by us, because she is our neighbour, a powerful neighbour, which may be friendly to us and cooperate with us or may be a thorn in our side." Hence his constant denunciation of Indian Communists for their extra-territorial loyalties, and since China was not a Communist power yet this reference was clearly to the Soviet Union.

Placed as India was between two mutually hostile systems which were more or less evenly balanced in the impact of their power upon India, Nehru decided that safety lay in joining neither, and therefore offending neither. India was certainly not big enough to defend herself alone. But she was big enough for each side to take a serious note, perhaps serious enough offence to call for retaliatory measures, if she joined the other. In this lay her best defence: so long as she did not provoke either side by joining the other, neither would drive her into the arms of the other.

Therefore *in its origins and intentions* Nehru's non-alignment was innocent of any ideological preference for the Communist powers. But it did not remain so; gradually a bias in favour of the Communist powers became visible. The workings of this bias belong to a subsequent chapter<sup>1</sup> but what it fed on belongs

<sup>1</sup> Non-alignment in Fact and Fiction.

# HIGH LEVEL MEETING



to this. There were certain inclinations, in Nehru's thinking as well as in the hard facts of the Indian situation, which would have done little harm to Indo-US relations if they had been properly projected by India or properly understood by the USA. But they were not. Being misunderstood themselves, they bred such powerful further misunderstandings that when a real divergence of interests intervened in the middle 'fifties, they made it look immensely larger than it was.

First of all India instinctively had a greater understanding of the Russian and Chinese scene than it had of the American. The reason for that was explained by Nehru very early in his political life, long before the days of the cold war and the Communist revolution in China. Nehru wrote about the Soviet Union in 1927 (and it applies even more to China): that "Russia interests . . . us specially because conditions there have not been, and are not even now, very dissimilar to conditions in India. Both are vast agricultural countries with only the beginnings of industrialisation, and both have to face poverty and illiteracy. If Russia finds a satisfactory solution for these, our work in India is made easier." On a number of occasions he expressed his loathing of the methods followed in the Soviet Union but he had sympathy for the premises and objectives.

It is true that by the time Nehru assumed effective control of India economic conditions in the Soviet Union became vastly different from those in India. But then in the meantime he had been to the United States to meet Truman and had seen that the difference in this case was vaster still. This fact alone would have diverted his interest from the United States a little even if his British-bred sensibilities had not been bruised by the coarseness he found in American life, its brashness and its affluence with a swagger.

Secondly, Nehru was attracted to the socialist experiment being conducted in the Communist countries, whereas the United States considered it to be an evil which it was trying to fight in all its forms. Nehru's interest in this experiment did not mean that as a power system he preferred the Communist to the American, as many in the United States misunderstood it to mean, but only that of the different roads to economic viability which a country could take, especially a country still emerging from colonialism, he was attracted to the socialist

road. Given time and sympathetic understanding, he would have been inclined to try, and in later years did, other roads also. But socialism was the first one to attract his attention because the socialist countries were more identified than the West, especially in the mind of the underdeveloped world, with the latter's own deeply felt need for economic and social justice.

The United States was known to be willing, and far abler than the Soviet Union, to help in the economic betterment of the deprived nations of the world; it was soon to launch the Point Four Programme. But it failed to have its full impact because the giver was as cool as most of the receivers were warm towards economic thinking which resembled the socialist countries' more than the USA's. Nehru was consciously and quite calculatedly warm towards it because, apart from other reasons, he found it good tactics to use against domestic Communism, and the collapse of the Telangana rebellion proved him right. But even of that reason there was not sufficient appreciation in the United States.

But what alienated Nehru's diplomacy from the USA's most was the difference in their views of the nature of the Communist threat and what, respectively, political and military approaches could do about it. The United States had not yet given in to pactomania, nor had the McCarthy era yet started. But guided by their different experiences, the two countries were beginning to choose their different paths, which did not begin to converge until only a few years before Nehru's death. The United States, just emerged from the world's most destructive war till then, concerned about the take-over of one European country after another by organised minorities backed by Russian divisions (which were still stationed in the East European countries) thought primarily of military alliances as the answer; military deterrence became its main instrument for the "containment" of Communism although (as India tended to recognize only grudgingly, if at all) it had also carried out the Marshall Plan, the most brilliantly executed economic rescue operation in the world's history.

India on the other hand had just completed more than a quarter century of political struggle which it had won only because it had succeeded in rousing and organising the political "will" of the people, numerically the largest force of nationalism

the world had even seen (at that time China was still caught up in the coils of a civil war). The United States thought in terms of the countries of Europe, where the levers of power were well-defined; the fist that held them could rule. Nehru's experience and thoughts were of societies such as India's, where the task, brilliantly performed in India by Gandhi, was to locate the symbols of incipient nationalism, which alone could release and organize the energies of the people. Their objectives were complimentary, to insure each country against foreign domination and to ensure for it the right to work out its economic and political salvation as best it may: combined, they would have worked out the best possible safeguards for freedom. But they were to be at loggerheads for years to come, much to the advantage of the Soviet Union (and even more, Chinese Communism later) which, once it had gained control of eastern Europe, was to switch to the tactics of exerting political influence which were to prove Nehru less wrong than John Foster Dulles.

He was proved only partly correct in Europe, where only a few countries, like France on one side and Poland on the other (Hungary also but that was much later) found alliances irksome to their sense of national self-respect and freedom. But he was proved almost invariably right in Asia and Africa, where nearly all the countries which became the *military* allies of the United States either remained politically weak internally or became strong only after they had broken away from alliances. India's own example showed that anything which came in conflict with nationalism suffered, be it a strong power like Britain was between the wars, or a powerful ideology like Communism, which in Asia at any rate prospered only, as in Indonesia, so long as it could use nationalism as its Trojan horse. On the eve of independence, when he called a conference of Asian nations, and again when he convened another in 1949 to support Indonesia against Dutch domination, he found other Asian leaders as staunchly nationalistic as himself, and nationalism much closer to their hearts than the romantic notion of an Asian personality.

Out of these affinities between nationalism he made an important part of the framework of his foreign policy. On the one hand he saw in them the greatest safeguard against Com-

munist infiltration, which he considered a greater danger than any overt military threat by the Communist powers. On the other hand he made them the basis for the one major extension he added to the policy of non-alignment: that the new nations of Asia and Africa, while refusing to join either of the two superpower blocs, should act in concert for the defence of their (as they seemed to be at the time) rather similar international interests. Whether he wished to promote a concert in order to give India a place of leadership or provided the leadership to promote the concert is less important than the effect of his effort upon India's relations with the super powers: it made Nehru's and by and large India's non-alignment more distinctly inclined towards the Communist powers than the USA.

Given the circumstances, it is not surprising that this happened. But it is ironic that it should have. The United States and India, each for its own reasons, were proceeding towards the same objective: to prevent the infiltration and subversion of the newly freed countries; the United States to curb the spread of Communist power, India because at least out of sympathy and perhaps also out of enlightened self-interest she wished to see nationalism enlarge and consolidate its area. But so clashing were their methods that they found themselves ranged on opposite sides on many issues concerning the rights of smaller powers and the lowering of tensions. This worked clearly to the disadvantage of both. India's because it discouraged the inflow of foreign aid and investment, an issue, among others, on which one of Nehru's most brilliant colleagues in the Cabinet, B. R. Ambedkar, resigned in September 1951. The USA's because India's alienation from it became a handicap throughout the fifties in the tussle with the Communists for the political sympathy of the Afro-Asian countries.

It has never been quite clear what the real American purpose was in spreading the net of alliances and pacts over half the world during the first half of the fifties. It is possible that the smaller countries of Asia and Africa were only pawns in a game: the purpose, it may well be, was not to shield *these* countries against the risks of Communism but only to use them as bases for posing such a multiple threat to key points in the Soviet Union that the Russians would be deterred from making their military encroachments into the heartland of Europe.

If that be the case the policy cannot be described as a failure, for the fact remains, whatever its cause, that not a single new country was drawn into the Soviet orbit in eastern or central Europe after the era of pacts and bases started.

On the other hand if the purpose was, as it was often stated to be, to curb the rise of the political influence of Communism, especially in the developing countries and colonies, then the pacts became an expensive failure of policy. Countries which were drawn willy-nilly into alliances, and most even among those which were lured into joining with attractive promises of economic aid, became more exposed, not less, to the charms of Communism, especially of the Russian variety. The United States became identified in nearly all the non-white countries with the co-sponsors or principal members of pacts especially Britain, France and the Netherlands—all of them colonial countries—and therefore with colonialism. Conversely, the Soviet Union came even more clearly to be thought of as the champion of anti-colonial people. Whether the belief was right or not is not the point; it was widespread enough to become an asset for Russia.

In the second place the pacts themselves became a hindrance to the growth of national self-respect among the members and therefore to the growth of nationalism where it was needed most, in the newly freed countries. Some of the latter might not have had the courage to say, others not the sensibility to realize, that they had been reduced to "subservience" in the alliances, the word used by de Gaulle in 1966 in respect of the position of even such a major country as France in the NATO alliance. But national institutions, especially if democratic, took longer to grow in countries which remained placidly in the pacts than in other countries similarly placed which remained outside the pacts, or were rebellious within as France was almost throughout the years of de Gaulle. This is what most infuriated Nehru and made him rail against the policy of pacts, giving his position in many international issues the appearance, which was not entirely without substance, of being closer to Moscow than Washington; the influence of his position in this respect upon that of other non-aligned countries was not negligible.

Nehru's view of nationalism, however mixed his motives, his view of pacts as a source of international tensions and as a

danger to peace, and the romantic notion he had of an "Asian personality" explain most of the main manifestations of his foreign policy during the first five years of India's independence. On its eve he called the first Asian Relations Conference, the begetter of a long line of Afro-Asian gatherings which broke only at Algiers in 1965. In 1949 he called the second Asian conference, specifically on Indonesia, where he said: "We meet because the freedom of a sister country has been imperilled, and the dying colonialism of a past age has raised its head again." In the same year he defined his own foreign policy thus: "In no way do we in our external, internal, political or economic policy propose to accept anything which involves the slightest degree of dependence upon any other authority." In 1950 India became one of the first countries to recognize the new Republic of China (the second non-Communist country to do so) which like India had become a focus of Asian resurgence. In the same year India took a leading part in organising the *Colombo conference* of Foreign Ministers for the assistance of underdeveloped areas. In 1951 Nehru signed Treaties of Friendship with *Burma* and *Indonesia*. In 1951 and '52 he had an acrimonious debate with the United States on behalf of *Japan* and then in June signed a separate Peace Treaty with it because he believed that the Treaty proposed by Washington did not "concede to Japan a position of honour, equality and contentment among the community of free nations".

On *Korea* he took a course disagreeable to both the Soviet Union and the United States, and a little later to China as well; the effect of his policy was to underline the bold analysis of the United Nations Secretary-General and the belief of the Korean people themselves, that the Big Powers "are responsible for the present plight of the country and have left it in the lurch", because of "the worldwide antagonism between the Soviet Union and the United States". Before, during and after the civil war, Nehru directed all his efforts towards giving a re-unified Korea the right to choose its own future, so that the forces of nationalism, always fierce in this plucky little country surrounded by big ones, should provide their own answer to the threat of Communism. But in this he was to be thwarted by the United States much more than by the other powers—not the last time, and the Korean affair became the first in a



long chain which gave to India's foreign policy the appearance of being even more pro-Soviet than it was.

Nehru's statements of this period were not lacking in appreciation of Western democracy and civilization. Apart from the deep-seated Western influence on his mind, imbibed in the days when he was a student in England, he had led India into the Commonwealth. His admiration for the USA was no less explicit. During his visit to Washington in the winter of 1949 he said of its builders: "They have long been enshrined in my heart, and their example has inspired me as it has inspired innumerable countrymen of mine.... The USA have struggled to freedom and unparalleled prosperity during the past century and a half, and today are a great, powerful nation.... They could not have done so if they had not been anchored in the great principles laid down in the early days of their history."

India's need of economic assistance could have provided more links with the West. Within the space of a single year, between the summers of 1951 and '52, India received over a million tons of foodgrains, free or on very cheap terms from the USA (as against only a tenth of that amount from the Soviet Union and even that on barter against commodities which India could ill-afford to spare); made bargains for the supply of fertilisers; received financial assistance and technical aid; and in addition to help from the US Government, received a fund for a wide range of purpose from the *Ford Foundation*.

But these links did not build up the same overall similarity of direction which India shared with the Soviet Union in matters of foreign policy. This was because divergences of world outlook intervened again, and if anything accentuated the divergence of economic outlook. As relations between the United States and the Soviet Union deteriorated, American opinion, especially Congressional, became increasingly hostile to economic aid for any country which was not distinctly an ally: even the debate on food supplies for India ranged more over India's foreign policy attitudes than her urgent need to alleviate near-famine conditions in certain areas. As the *Brockings Institution* reported, a major shift occurred in 1950-51 in official US thinking about economic aid. "Unless it appears that there is a reasonable expectation that economic aid will be of direct use in checking Communism in a given

country, it will not be given." This jarred intensely on India's sensibilities, which were especially sharp at this time on matters affecting domestic politics or relations with other countries.

The rigours of this inhibition began to soften in America about the end of 1952, after the season of Presidential elections. But by that time another controversy had started: planning had become more than a matter of policy in India; it was a matter of conviction, and it began to jar on American ears. The myth that India was a socialist country was on its way, and with it the controversy between *public* and *private* sectors which became a factor in calculations about economic relations between India and the USA.

## THE DOMESTIC FRAME

SIMULTANEOUSLY with non-alignment in foreign affairs, *Nehru* began to develop its domestic counterpart, *democratic socialism*. He had said before independence that democracy and socialism were parts of one whole in Indian conditions. After independence he began to join the two in institutions and concepts. At the top of the planning pyramid he created the *National Development Council* in 1952 which has a wider jurisdiction than Parliament: the former discusses States plans also; the latter cannot. Hence he brought into the N.D.C. not only the Prime Minister, all members of the Planning Commission (in whose deliberations many central cabinet ministers take part) but also State Chief Ministers and their Ministers of Planning. At the lower extremity, a few years later, he made economic planning for village communities the special task of a three-tiered structure of fully elected local councils which were given financial and administrative powers on a rising scale. In between, state and Central plans were placed under permanent review by the respective State legislatures and Parliament. The review has not always been effective; in recent years perhaps its failures have outnumbered successes. But a structure was set up in the early fifties which made the democratic process impinge directly and closely upon the process of planning, whose bias was required by the Congress, the Government and Parliament and the State legislatures to be socialistic.

*Elections* of course were the key to the whole structure. Yet the decision to leave so much to elected representatives was not taken without hesitations; even *Nehru* had moments of doubt and anxiety. He had done more to fight and win elections than anyone else. Yet on the eve of the first General Election he said, in December 1951, that he was "a little doubtful whether adult franchise could succeed in India. The voter reacts to sound and din, he reacts to repetition, and he produces either a dictator or a politician who is insensitive". Ten days later he was again reported as saying: "There should be some

sort of indirect elections in the higher stages and direct elections in the lower. Direct election of such a vast number is a complicated problem and the candidates may never come into touch with the electorate, and the whole thing becomes distant. Just before the second General Election he again suggested indirect elections at higher levels and direct below.

If Nehru could have these many doubts, others could have more. After the first General Election, a periodical founded by Mahatma Gandhi quoted him as having said that decisions should be taken by consensus, not by voting, direct or indirect. Between the two General Elections Jayaprakash Narayan, the most articulate of Gandhians, worked out on this basis a whole new thesis which he called "Towards a New Society" in which democracy would function through representatives chosen by consensus, not contest; then alone would democracy be rescued from the rigours of the party system which enables a caucus to rule the country, he believes, because at successive stages the most numerous single minority can monopolize power. The Chairman of the Union Public Services Commission said after the first elections: "I have no use for this kind of democracy where the herd determines who should be our legislators." Others were daunted by the sheer size of the operation. Even in 1951 there were 177 million voters, 3,800 seats, 17,000 candidates belonging to 77 political parties or organizations, 90,000 polling stations, 224,000 polling booths, 2,500,000 ballot boxes, and 620,000,000 ballot papers. The world's newest democracy was thus going to hold the world's largest elections ever. Would it be able to?

Many grotesque things happened in 1951 which at the time and subsequently gave some substance to the doubts in the minds of many. In Orissa, which has very poor communications, 700 pigeons had to be used; of the messages they brought one said that the election officials concerned, after trudging eight miles and crossing a river, found that the school building they were to use as the polling station had not yet been built. One station was visited only by an elephant and two by panthers. All the votes of one village were decided in a wrestling match; prayers for food, children and better crops were found in some ballot boxes, donations to the government in some, votes for Nehru in the ballot boxes of many Congress

candidates, in one even grass for the brace of bulls which in all three elections has been the campaign symbol of the Congress. Disregarding the secrecy of ballot and the theoretical freedom of each individual voter, the good people of Jehangir, in Amritsar district, continued their practice of the whole village voting unanimously and by a show of hands after staging a debate between the opposing candidates or their agents; they banned other forms of electioneering in the village.

But the surprise was not that these aberrations occurred—they were such exceptions to the rule that they became sufficiently newsworthy to attract the newspapers' attention—but that on the whole the polling was smooth and successful. In the whole country there were only seven instances of polling being adjourned because of disorders, only at 193 places was a re-poll required; the countrywide cost of the exercise was a little over half a rupee per vote cast; 107,000,000 voters, or roughly 60 per cent of the electorate voted (70 per cent in Kerala and in numerous constituencies in other States). By and large people took keen interest in the occasion; that they treated it as a festival in some areas—in parts of Orissa shops ran out of cloth because people ordered new sets of clothes for the day—is a matter of less concern than their indifference would have been.

The *Election Commission*, an independent body which derives its authority from the President of the Republic, not from the government elected by the party in power in Parliament, functioned remarkably well and with such patent impartiality that no opposition party, however small its success, complained—or has since complained—that any favour was shown to the Congress by the Commission or its lower echelons. (There have been complaints against the executive machinery of the government; but these, a different matter, are discussed in a later chapter.)<sup>1</sup> Of the Government's basic intention to remain impartial there was enough evidence already: it ordered elections much earlier than it needed to; by its own majority it passed the Constitution which set up an independent Commission for elections; it fixed by law that there must be

<sup>1</sup> See *The Shape of Democracy*.

approximately an equal number of voters in all comparable constituencies (the size being different for parliamentary and state legislature constituencies) so that little room was left for any gerrymandering.

It would have been too much to expect that the first General Election held on adult franchise would yield an accurate map of India's political mind. But many things suggest that the map they did yield was surprisingly accurate, notwithstanding the grass and the prayers and the donations in the ballot boxes. The results showed for one thing that India was not nearly as ripe for being fragmented and splintered up between a multitude of parties as might have been imagined by the host of major and minor parties which began to organise themselves so hopefully for the contest. The results also showed that the voters' preference lay for the middle-of-the-road democratic, secular parties, especially those which have some—but not too great—socialist bias. The conservative parties of the right did not do so well as those of the left; neither did as well—nowhere near it—as those with a democratic but left of centre programme.

The main distortion in the picture, which persisted for fifteen years,<sup>1</sup> came from the single non-transferable vote system which has had to be adopted because anything more complicated like the proportionate voting system or the transferable vote is not practicable, yet. As a result, the *Congress* nearly everywhere won a majority of seats on what was nearly everywhere a minority of votes: in Parliament it took 362 out of 489 seats with a 45 per cent vote; in Bombay, to take an example from the States, 89.39 per cent seats for 49.95 per cent votes. The *Socialists* on the other hand polled 11.91 per cent votes in Bombay and took only 2.85 per cent seats.

But subject to this the results reflected the broad distribution of forces in the country fairly well. The Congress polled about four times as many votes as the nearest rival party leaving out the "independents", the *Socialists*. It had nearly fifteen times as many seats as the nearest rival in this respect, the *Communists*. With only about half as many votes the *Com-*

<sup>1</sup> The fourth General Election, 1967, corrected this distortion to a large

munists, by concentrating their effort, won twice as many Parliamentary seats as the Socialists, who had spread themselves out thinly. (The Communists in fact were the only party which maintained a close parallel between votes and seats: they won about five per cent seats in Parliament and the State legislatures with about five per cent of the vote in elections to both.) The *Jan Sangh* polled more votes than other parties of the right, but the Communists polled out about 60 per cent more than the *Jan Sangh*. Other communal parties and those identified with landed or monied interests generally fared badly; such representation as their point of view had came more through "independents" who had local prestige or influence, such as some of the dispossessed states rulers and zamindars; in fact the latter's success as individuals was good enough to encourage them, though "lure" them is a better word considering the fate they met, to form parties of their own in later elections.

The election results did not have a very decisive influence upon the policies which followed. Many had been outlined before the elections. The Planning Commission had been set up already: on both main fronts of the economy, rural and industrial, the Congress had already indicated its ideological stand. In its election manifesto in 1946, it had called for sweeping changes in land tenure. In 1948 it made a more precise statement demanding that non-profit agencies like rural co-operative should replace the middle man and his usurious market; the lands of non-cultivating landowners should be cultivated by a cooperative of the village community, and a ceiling should be fixed on all landholdings.

Also in 1948, the Government obtained parliamentary approval for an *Industrial Policy Resolution*. It was subsequently to be stiffened, in 1956, but even in its 1948 version it enabled government to enlarge its powers for regulating the industrial economy. It divided industry and transport into three categories, reserving the first exclusively for the State, in the second allowing the private sector to coexist with the public, and in the third giving the State extensive powers of regulation and control. The party manifesto for 1951 also developed these themes, though in broader terms. Therefore such socialism as the government developed after the elections cannot be ascribed

wholly to the latter's influence upon the Congress.

Even for the two main specifics of Nehru's socialism — planning as the vehicle, the State as the motive power — certain objective conditions of life in India are at least as much responsible as the impact of the elections. On the one hand conditions were particularly favourable for planning, on the other they made massive State participation unavoidable. In a country so impregnated with poverty of resources, *planning* of priorities would have forced itself even upon a government far more innocent of ideology than Nehru's. It could not have left allocation of resources entirely to the forces of the market: market forces were just not developed enough for this purpose. There was indeed an *industrial structure* of sorts — parts of it, such as textiles and jute manufactures, extensive and well-established. But it was too small to be a basis by itself for a greatly expanded economy. In 1948-49, factory establishments accounted only for 6.6 per cent of the total national income and engaged only 2.4 million workers, or 1.8 per cent of the working population of the country. The total industrial consumption of electric power was 2,400 million kwh. Output of coal was less than 33 million tons, of iron ore only 3 million tons, of finished steel just over a million tons.

Nor was there much motive power in the *rural economy*. At the top of the agricultural and social hierarchy and the power structure of the village, there were the holders of superior revenue rights who were the creatures of the court, whether the ruling authority of the time was Hindu or Mughal or British. They were the hereditary non-working, rent-collecting intermediaries, layered between the State, which had the ultimate revenue rights, and the actual tillers of land. They had a certain amount of wealth and therefore the potential for capital formation. But after doing nothing more for generations than merely to live on the labour of others they had become one of the most inferior elements in Indian society, the backwardness of their social outlook was unredeemed by the ruthless drive of early capitalism.

At the lower end of the scale, rural economy was weighed down by the *agricultural labourer*, always and still the worst off person in India, who in many states formed more than 30 per cent of the agricultural population and in most states more



than 15 per cent. Only slightly above him was the cultivator (very often not the owner) of small holdings, ten acres or less, which in Uttar Pradesh formed 93.9 per cent of the holdings and covered 64.9 per cent of the cultivated area; in Bombay 80 per cent and 39 per cent; in Madhya Pradesh 71 per cent and 22 per cent; in Orissa 89.5 per cent and 52.1 per cent; in Mysore 87.4 per cent and 49.3 per cent. The cultivators of such small holdings were vulnerable both to social and economic pressures. They could easily be persuaded by the landlord to surrender their rights in his favour "voluntarily", as the law permitted them to, which made this the most perfect of the dodges used by the landlords when the government tried to put a ceiling on their holdings. Obviously such cultivators had no capacity in them for capital formation or for giving a forward push to the economy. The slightly better off farmer, whose holdings averaged between ten and twenty acres, was later to give some momentum and offer some resistance to the top bracket farmer; his growing assertiveness is one of the very interesting recent economic and political phenomenon. But in the early 'fifties his arrival was still about eight or ten years in the future. Therefore the *rural economy*, far from being an instrument of change in other sectors also, was itself in a static condition.

Between them Indian agriculture and industry thus proved that there just was not enough steam in the economy to carry it forward on its own; it had to be given an organized boost by others, making large-scale State intervention inevitable. Any government in New Delhi, whatever its political complexion and whatever the result of the elections, would have been forced to this general conclusion by the facts.

This does not suggest in the least that the results of the elections did not have any impact upon the government's thinking. But their effect was not so much to create new trends as to sharpen and hasten trends which were already shaping up. The extent of popular participation, the strong preference for parties which had a leftist rhetoric and the failure of the Congress to get an absolute majority of votes had an effect upon certain aspects of the *First Five Year Plan*, which was on the anvil when the elections were held.

In keeping with the popularity of the milder forms of socia-

lism which the elections proved, the plan accentuated its own leftward leaning—but not too much. It still kept its face turned away firmly from nationalization of existing enterprises, which would mean acquisition by the government of the existing productive assets—"most of the purposes of such a transfer of ownership can be served by judicious regulation", it explained. But the accent changed. "Inevitably", it emphasized, the *private* sector has to accept 'new obligations towards the worker, the investor and the consumer.' There must also be "a progressive widening of the *public* sector and a re-orientation of the private sector to the needs of planned economy". Constantly the stress was on so charting the course of development that "the commanding heights of the economy" would be in the hands of the State.

"It will be seen", the Plan document argued, "that nearly 60 per cent of the planned outlay will result directly in the creation of productive capital in the ownership of the Central and State Governments; this will be mainly under irrigation and power, transport and communications and industry. The remaining 40 per cent will partly add to the productive equipment of the private sector, partly provide assistance in the form of working capital or advisory or administrative services, partly help to maintain and expand social services, partly act as incentive for community effort in development."

The Plan document was also at pains to emphasize that "as far as the ownership of productive capital assets (other than in agriculture, small-scale industry, transport and in residential housing) is concerned, the share of the *public* sector is already large. The book value of the gross fixed assets owned by the Central and State Governments, together with the working capital in the enterprises concerned, amounted to \$2,400 million at the end of 1950-51 (as compared with \$1,750 million at the end of 1947-48)". On the other hand, "the value of productive capital assets in the *private* sector (again excluding agriculture, small-scale industry and transport, and residential housing) in 1950 was not perhaps more than about \$3,000 million".

Having thus done its duty by the voter, the Plan could afford to overlook the fact that the war it claimed to have won on behalf of the public sector was a phoney war. In the figures it

gave of the *public* sector's assets at the start of the First Plan period it included railways (\$ 1,674 million) and irrigation works (\$ 460 million) while industry accounted for only \$ 68 million in the public sector as against \$ 2,220 million in the private sector. In the Plan allocations industry accounted for such a small proportion, \$ 346 million or 8.4 per cent, that its breakdown into private and public sectors would have had no significance. But the real battle between the two sectors, at that time and in later years, was waging around industry, not around the railways or multi-purpose projects. The latter are so obviously a part of the overheads of economy, in most cases incapable of yielding much profit if they are to serve the purpose of uplifting backward agriculture, that no private sector enthusiast would want to take over the responsibility for building them. In Indian conditions the same thing applies to railways though it might not in other countries; the private sector has never said that it wishes to get back this expensive apparatus which the private companies (mostly British), the former owners, handed over to the government long before independence. But whether or not the Plan did an honest job in defining "public" and "private" sectors in terms relevant to the controversies of the day, by making its claims the way it did it succeeded in appearing to have made a deep bow to the kind of political trend the elections had thrown up.

The preference which voters showed for equalitarian manifestoes caused certain changes in the draft *Plan* (published ahead of elections) before it came out as the final document soon after the results. The draft insisted that *existing land holdings* which exceeded the proposed ceiling on holdings should not be deprived of the excess. Otherwise, it said, "on the larger farms production will fall and, for a period at any rate, on the other farms also, and it may well be that the decline in production may have a serious effect on the stability and well-being of rural society as a whole". Therefore the limitation should apply only to future holdings. But the final document, like the Agrarian Reforms Committee set up by the Congress some years earlier, asked for a ceiling on existing holdings as well. This, it said, "would provide for a large measure of redistribution of land belonging to substantial owners". The argument about the effect on production was dropped.

A similar shift appeared in the debate regarding *cooperative farming* with compulsory pooling of the ownership of land. The final document said: "While the controversy between voluntary and compulsory formation of co-operatives may at this stage be avoided, it can be suggested that in any area where a majority of holders representing at least half of the total area under cultivation desire to establish a cooperative farm, legislative means should be at their disposal to proceed with the formation of a cooperative society for the whole village. The State on its part should do everything in its power to encourage the establishment of such farms and to promote their satisfactory working afterwards."

Seeing how eagerly people had taken part in the elections the Plan scheme put added emphasis upon *popular participation* in economic development. The final document declares repeatedly: "The party in power not only has to carry public opinion with it, it has to get the active cooperation of all sections.... From every aspect agricultural development turns upon the extent to which the people take up programmes with enthusiasm and are willing to work for them... it is necessary to stress the importance of ensuring, right from the start, the people's participation, not merely in the execution of community development projects but also in their planning. This in fact is the very essence of the programme.... Public cooperation and public opinion constitute the principal force and sanction behind planning. A democracy working for social ends has to base itself on the willing assent of the people and not the coercive power of the State."

The one job the Plan did thoroughly was to evolve a new scheme of *community development*, drawing together the many threads experience in this field had already spun, and weaving out of them a pattern of great significance. Heartbreak and failure were some distance away in the future. But for the time being it was possible to entertain great expectations as the pattern took shape. With everyone eager for an auspicious start, October 2, 1952, birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, was chosen for launching the programme which was closer to Gandhi's village-oriented thinking than anything else the government had done. The Plan had allotted \$ 180 million to it, which was a little more than half the total allotment for industry. Obviously

there was going to be no dearth of finances if the programme did not run into any other serious bottlenecks.

The rationale of the scheme showed a most promising way out of the difficulties which had defeated previous efforts. It also provided full justification for the innovations which were going to be tried out. Rural development work was not unknown in India; indeed not. It had been attempted with in exhaustible goodwill and over a period extending more than thirty years into the past by a succession of very able administrators, the cream of the India-minded among British officialdom. But it had only succeeded in scratching the surface. Either the scale of the effort was too small to be significant, or it had inadequate backing; in either case it dried up before it could make any impact. Either the sponsoring genius or his successor failed to evoke stable popular support because no continuing organization was set up which was mass-oriented. Where an unusual official succeeded in breaking out of bureaucratic attitudes he found himself out on a limb; he did not have sufficient agencies around him to be able to cover the village in all its aspects, the purely productive as well as the social. Or even if a sufficient number of agencies were energised at the same time, they all functioned in their individual grooves; in parallel lines which never met, they moved down to the particular fragment of the village life which concerned them and up to their own particular desk in the provincial secretariats. At no point was there a comprehensive approach.

The *Community Development Programme* aimed at breaking through all these limitations. It would have the advantage of functioning in the new era inaugurated by the first General Election, with popular awareness and participation as proven facts of life; not only negative or "anti" participation as during the struggles against British rule, but positive and constructive, as the people had shown by turning out in such large numbers to choose their new rulers. It would be a continuing organization, not the short-lived spark of an individual's enthusiasm. From the government it would get all the organizational and financial backing that it could hope to make use of. It would have its own field and instruments of operation, distinct from the peace keeping and revenue collecting machinery of the government. The CDP Ministry in New Delhi would be the

main advisory and coordinating body, devising policies and their variations and observing their effects, cross-matching objectives at higher levels with the experience gained at the lower. The corresponding ministries in the State Governments would be the principal executive agencies, each with a chain of command reaching down into the village through whole-time staff and part-time advisers at the district and block level (in the areas covered by the scheme, gradually to be extended until it covered the whole country, each district, of which the country has 336, would have roughly fifteen to twenty CD blocks in it, and each block a hundred villages).

A single officer, of comprehensive experience and able to evoke and guide popular participation, would bring all the threads together at the level of the block, thus removing the fragmentation from which earlier schemes had suffered, and imparting comprehensive coordination to the new; from him schemes for change and improvement would travel severally: up, through the Deputy Commissioner of the district, to the Secretariat; down, through his various specialised assistants to the village. He would touch the production aspects of the village through the extension agencies at his disposal, which would include ground level experts in farming practices; the social aspects through educational and social welfare staff.

The BDO, as the key man at the block level was called, and the staff at his disposal were the first major administrative innovation attempted after independence. The political leadership suspected, and quite rightly, that the western educated city-bred and bureaucratically trained official, while adequate to the routine tasks of officialdom, would not be suited to the new tasks involved in leading the people in a sponsored revolution. Until education became more widespread and occupational barriers became a thing of the past, most officials would have an urban middle class background, too remote from the ethos of rural India to make them fit instruments for inspiring the rural people to change. On the other hand, among the newly educated youth of the smaller towns which lie embedded in the countryside, among many ex-Servicemen who had settled back in the village after some years in service which would have widened their horizons, among people who had learnt to lead people during the struggle for freedom, there would be recruits

available for the new kind of jobs being created at the block level and below. They would never be recruited into the normal machinery of officialdom, but hand-picked by the political leadership, which would have the eye for such talent, and left free of the usual restrictions of red tape, they could become the catalysts which rural India needed.

So completely right did the programme appear, so well conceived in all its parts, that when it was launched there was all the appearance of the start of an era. India seemed set for an economic revolution by completely democratic means: she had just demonstrated, by successfully holding the world's largest elections, that her democracy was real: now she had started a new process which showed every promise of proving that economic transformation with the consent of the people was not the pipe dream of a woolly-headed liberal. At the same time the Communist revolution in China was about to enter its most ruthless phase, and many saw in the close juxtaposition of the two processes in time and space all the makings of one of history's great contests between contrasting ideologies. This expectation was only to add later to the dimensions of India's failure. But for the time being it made India the object of half the world's sympathy and support, inducing many countries to give what she was going to need most—foreign aid—as she began to chart the future course of her economy.

## CHAPTER 8

# THE YEARS OF NEHRU

### THE VOYAGE OF IDEOLOGY

WITH THE abnormal tasks of sheer survival behind her, India started the more normal course of evolution somewhere around the early '50s. By that time she had given herself a new Constitution as the overall summary of her new personality; she had tested elections and planning as the instruments of her intentions; she had located her major points of reference in the outside world and she had at the helm a new and undisputed leader whose thinking could be seen in a clear outline already. Now she was ready to fill the frame. The direction was set; the task now was to work out a course and to follow it. In the more pithy phrases of W. H. Morris-Jones, "The period since 1952 is one in which a system which has achieved a recognisable form and stability undertakes its operational voyage."

It was in this voyage that intentions began to emerge as policies, events as trends, individual occurrences as parts of a running theme, as points on a curve, not as isolated dots. India's successes and failures are best understood if they are compared with their antecedents in the middle '50s; comparable antecedents for or instructive contrasts with nearly everything that has happened since can be found in the period defined by the first and the third General Elections. These are in essence the Years of Nehru and of promise. They have the key to nearly all of Nehru's great achievements and equally great failures which, even if they had their preludes earlier or denouements later, acquired maturity during this decade. His moods were at this time the moods of the country; his confusions, and these were many, were its. If there was a spirit of elan in spite of there being very little basis for it, it was because he was capable of feeling elated; if policies appeared to look two ways at once, it was because of the interminable debates within him; if there was a successful fusion of such apparent opposites as planning and democracy it was because they were fused within his think-



ing first. Whatever Indian socialism did not owe to objective conditions it owed to his outlook, especially to his impatience to break through the barriers of an old world into a new. So there is nothing about Indian viewpoints regarding her economy, domestic politics or foreign policy or any other aspect of the country's life which can be understood without an understanding of this period, more especially of Nehru's mind at that time.

The "operational voyage" of India's economy in this period had to adjust itself to four different sets of facts and the general "mix" of Indian thinking about them: the given facts of the economy, especially industry, the absence of planning and regulation in the first five years after independence, the growing demand in the Congress and, as the elections showed, in the country, for socialist planning, and the catalytic role of foreign aid which was little understood at the start of the decade but by the end had become a major preoccupation of the planners and even an influence upon foreign policy. It was the resultant of these forces which set the direction of economic thinking in this decade, and the direction was distinctly leftward; if the results appeared to follow a different tack it was because of an outstanding characteristic of the Years of Nehru, that if the principles of policy looked one way the aggregate of its details looked another way.

At the start of this period Indian industry had already begun to spread its wings: the First Plan had allotted \$ 955 million to it (considerably more than two-thirds of it in the private sector). Many of the individual projects were considered to be ambitious by Indian standards of those days: the Sindri fertiliser factory was to produce 1,000 tons of ammonium sulphate a month; the Perambur factory one complete railway coach every working day, the Chittaranjan factory 100 locomotives a year by 1955 and 120 a year two years later; in 1955 an agreement was signed with Russia for a steel plant at Bhilai to produce a million tons of rolled steel a year; a British consortium was invited to set up an equally big plant and the German firm of Krupp to expand to a million-ton capacity the steel plant set up with their help at Rourkela.

But the overall economic condition was very different. Industry was an infant; its expansion under its own steam was out of the question. And the weakest areas were those, like steel

and electricity, which underdeveloped private industry is least able to support. Some specific industries, like jute and cotton textiles and tea, were developed well enough to look after themselves, and to make a strong impression on the ideology of the planners, but they could not determine or govern the ideology. Therefore conditions themselves, apart from anyone's preference for it, made the country adopt a "mixed economy", in which public and private sectors would co-exist each within a reasonably well-defined area but each area larger than its tenant could cope with, so that each could expand amply without detriment to the other.

The socialists were to call this a "mixed up" economy in later years, seeing how much freedom it allowed to free enterprise and how unsocialistic the resulting pattern was. But in contrast with the immediate past the mixture was a stiff dose of socialism. Independence was not yet six months old when, with the help of Gandhi and Patel, business and commerce and the free enterprisers in the Congress won a notable victory by securing demolition of all price controls. These indeed were an irksome inheritance from the war, but so sudden and sweeping was their removal and so rapacious the instinct to profiteer that within a few weeks prices rose by 30 per cent and widespread industrial unrest followed, giving trade unionism its first great opportunity. Controls had to be brought back again but then private capital responded with a strike of its own, scaring the government off any socialistic intentions.

When in the middle of 1948 the government announced its eagerly awaited Industrial Policy Resolution its mildness took everyone by surprise; and the trend continued for some time longer. At least for three years thereafter Nehru did not set up even the machinery of planning, let alone provide ideological motivation for it. Even when it was appointed the Commission did not make the government an ideological ogre. The mechanism for regulating private industry became increasingly more complex and time-consuming and some of the budgets were a burden; but the overall effect was far from limiting.

Then the making of the mixture started. In 1950 the Constitution was adopted, which diffusely but authoritatively committed the government to an equalitarian approach. This became a new trend with Nehru's speeches in the early fifties.

which he peaked in November 1954; while setting up the National Development Council as the apex of the country's planning apparatus, he declared that what he wanted was a "socialistic picture of society" though he hastened to add "not in a dogmatic sense at all". In the next few weeks, when the 1948 Industrial Policy Resolution was given its first revision, the phrase became "socialist pattern of society". A month later, in January 1955 the Congress put a red ring around a date by passing the Avadi resolution. All Congressmen refer to this as a crucial date, whether they deplore or welcome the fact that only about half a dozen of the government's subsequent actions were conceived in the Avadi spirit.

The Congress party's need for socialistic clothing was urgent in that month because only a month hence elections were to be held in neighbouring Andhra where at a previous election the Communists had thrown up a really strong challenge. And it cannot be denied that the Congress got down to it in the right spirit. Adopting the modified version of Nehru's earlier phrase, it set 'a socialist pattern of society' (a phrase to which, in their speeches at any rate, Congress politicians have never allowed a moment's rest) as the aim and objective of planning, so that "the principal means of production are under social ownership or control, production is progressively speeded up, and there is equitable distribution in the national wealth". Nationalization was distinctly underplayed; the private sector would continue to have "a definite place in our economy at present" provided that it functioned in terms of the national plan. But the objective was set up to be an economy in which the State would "play a vital part in planning and development", would "initiate and operate large-scale schemes... would have overall control of resources, social purposes and trends and essential balances in the economy. Some of its methods would be "maintenance of strategic controls, prevention of private trusts and cartels and maintenance of standards of labour and production". Nowhere did the Congress fail more than in securing and using these methods; but that is a later story.

Between 1955 when the Avadi resolution was passed and 1959 when it was given a rural extension in certain resolutions on cooperative farming, government distilled a few decisions out of its many intentions which gave a new dimension to the

political preferences which were rapidly developing in the party. A new Industrial Policy Resolution with more "teeth" in it was issued in April 1956. This too divided industries into three categories, like the first: (1) those in which future development would be the exclusive responsibility of the State; (2) those in which the State would generally take the initiative and private enterprise would only be expected to supplement the government's effort; and (3) the remaining industries, whose future development would generally be left to private initiative and enterprise. But it expanded the first and second lists in favour of the State and included in the first nearly everything needed as the base of the entire industrial economy.

In its statement of purposes, which was ampler than in the first resolution, the second superimposed socio-political reasons upon the more or less purely economic justification written into the first for reserving certain industries for the public sector. Included in the new reasons was reduction of disparities in income and wealth, and prevention of private monopolies and the concentration of economic power in the hands of small numbers of individuals. Therefore the State must assume "predominant and direct responsibility" for setting up new industrial undertakings and for developing transport facilities. "Adoption of the socialist pattern of society... as well as the need for planned and rapid development require that all industries of basic and strategic importance, or in the nature of public utilities, should be in the public sector. Other industries which are essential, and which require investment on a scale which only the state in the present circumstances can provide, have also to be in the public sector."

Next, some acts of nationalization and exhaustive regulation of private industry followed, and too close upon each other for the comfort of private enterprise. The latter also did not help itself much; it tended always to under-estimate the need for rapidly expanding vital sectors of the economy. But its tail got definitely deeper between its legs as the Imperial Bank was nationalised in 1955, life insurance in 1956, and immediately thereafter a gigantic consolidated Company Law went into operation with power to extend its tentacles right into every board meeting in all parts of the economy. In 1959 followed state intervention in the trade in foodgrains, where much of

what later grew up into private, commercial and industrial capital had spent its infancy.

Far more than in 1948, when the Reserve Bank of India was nationalized, the government came to grips with the strongholds of private finance in the middle fifties by taking over the Imperial Bank and far more still by nationalizing life insurance business which was closely enmeshed in practically every field of private enterprise. It took over 109 Indian and three foreign life insurance companies; assets amounting to \$-760 million; a net annual income of \$ 24 million; total aggregate insurances in force exceeding \$ 2,000 million or an average insurance of \$ 5 per head of the population; five million policies which annually paid \$ 110 million in premiums; and scope for expansion which government estimated would take the business to \$ 16,000 million on per capita insurance of \$ 40. This was the range of investment potential which the government acquired in reaching what the Finance Minister, Sir C. D. Deshmukh, described as "another milestone on the road the country has chosen in order to reach the goal of a socialistic pattern of society".

The party background to these decisions was interesting. The new Congress President, U.N. Dhebar, a true Gandhian, began to give the party a grass-roots organization, something it had not had now for years and which had definitely withered away in the long years when the offices of Congress President and Prime Minister were combined under Nehru. Dhebar failed, but that was later. The immediate impact was to raise an expectation: the party base has always been more Left-leaning than the top and it was thought that if Dhebar really succeeded in revitalising the roots a new colouration would travel to the upper layers. Independently of that, other interesting changes began to take place in the higher echelons: Krishna Menon moved from the private consultation chambers of Nehru to a seat in the government, as Minister without Portfolio in February 1956, and as Defence Minister at the age of 60, in April 1957. Only a few months earlier the Communists had won the elections in Kerala, the first Communist Party ever to win freely held secret ballot elections anywhere in the world. Since the Congress has habitually veered closer to the side from which the challenge is strongest, everyone rightly concluded that the Left-resurgence in the party, already begun, would grow.

At the end of 1957 an activist group of "progressives" formed the Congress Socialist Forum in the party, the first time such a group was formed since Patel squeezed out Jayprakash Narain and his brand of Socialists. (In 1951 Kripalani, still in the Congress at that time and still hugging to himself his belief that he was Socialist, had tried to form the Democratic Front but was dissuaded by Nehru in the interests of party unity; if Nehru gave any such advice to the new Forum there is no record of it). The leading lights of the Forum were the powerful trio: Krishna Menon, upon whose advice Nehru leaned more than on any one else's in those days; K. D. Malaviya, an aggressive controversialist and highly unorthodox but successful Oil Minister, anathema to foreign oil companies until, in unsavoury circumstances, he fell from office in 1963; and Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister's daughter and herself Prime Minister in 1966, who probably made little direct contribution to the Forum in those days but was its star attraction for the crowds: to some extent the Planning Minister, Nanda, and definitely his Deputy Minister, S. N. Mishra.

Then in 1959 — a most interesting year in the development of Indian politics since, on the one hand, it saw the birth of organized economic conservation as the Swatantra Party and, on the other, saw the Congress take its maximum lurch to the Left — the Congress met at Nagpur to display its socialist feathers in two ways: it elected Indira Gandhi as its President and adopted a programme of cooperative farming than which no economic pronouncement of the party has raised a bigger controversy. In all the years which followed the Congress did not a thing to implement what it was saying. But say it did that "the future agrarian pattern should be that of cooperative joint farming in which land will be pooled for joint cultivation, farmers continuing to retain their property rights and getting a share from the net produce in proportion to their land".

None of these happenings was very decisive by itself. None gave enough reason to the socialists to hope or the private sector to fear that a new era was about to begin in which something much sterner would take the place of "mixed economy". Industrial resolutions had come and gone before; the 1948 one, watery in the first place, the government itself had by-passed fairly unashamedly; a month after the 1956 edition, Nehru

eased its impact by saying: "You must not only permit the private sector, but I say encourage it in its own field." The terminology of the resolution was stiffer. But (being adopted, like the Avadi resolution, with elections approaching) it could also be a time-serving signal, to be lowered once that storm had passed. Besides, as the course of the First Plan proved and of the Second was going to, the private sector was quite able to take care of itself and in the process educate the planners to respect it more. Not only did it have its supporters in the highest echelons of the party, powerful enough to see that no harm came to it (and, as a result, to themselves). It had also shown a capacity for growth which government became increasingly unable to overlook as the need for more production became more urgent and the public sector showed itself unable to keep pace.

Nor were other events of the mid-'50s drastically socialistic innovations. The Nagpur resolutions were soon to become more important for polemics than policy. If Krishna Menon became Defence Minister, Morarji Desai — nobody's socialist — became Finance Minister in 1958. The march of nationalization was more serious but so far occupied only a small area of the total economy. The Socialist Forum, even with the Congress President behind it, was not going to be able to shift this elephantine party out of the mire of indecisions. Therefore none of these things was by itself enough to shift the ideological gears of the government's or the party's thinking about the economy. But all of them together created the strong expectation that new readings were being taken of the country's ideological weather, and it seemed more likely than ever before or since that the "operational voyage" was going to be set on a socialistic course.

What the planners thought the course should be can be clearly seen in the most of their intentions and some of their actions, the main vehicle of both being the Plans themselves. The Second Plan was more elaborate in concept: it was not just an aggregate of projects as the first was, nor was its impact upon the economy as a whole merely the net resultant of the benefits derived from these projects; quite the reverse. It proceeded from certain overall estimates of the requirements of growth, such as the increases in the national and per capita incomes needed for economic viability and political stability, and then

translated these targets into the projects needed for reaching them. The Third Plan corrected some of the excesses of this approach but far from abandoning it refined its methods.

Both plans stepped up the basic philosophy suggested in the First Plan. The Second, in statements which are telescoped here, said: "Public ownership, partial or complete, and public control of or participation in management are specially required in those fields in which technological considerations tend towards a concentration of economic power and of wealth. . . . the public sector must grow not only absolutely but also relatively to the private sector. Economic policy and institutional changes have to be planned in a manner that would secure economic advance along democratic and egalitarian lines. Rapid industrialisation and diversification of the economy are the core of development. The country must aim at developing basic industries and industries which make machines to make the machine needed for further development. This calls for substantial expansion in iron and steel, non-ferrous metals, coal, cement, heavy chemicals, and other industries of basic importance. A large expansion of public enterprise in the sphere of industrial and mineral development is envisaged. Given an appropriate structure of relative prices, which Government can and has to control and influence, the desired allocation of resources in the private sector can be induced. The public sector has to grow—and rapidly—and the private sector has to conform to the requirements of the Plan."

The scheme of the Third Plan underscored the intentions of the Second Plan and added some of its own bat. Instead of unadulterated private enterprise even in the area reserved for it, the Third Plan recommended that more and more of it should be run on cooperative lines, and not only in agriculture but in small and medium industries as well; "the development of a cooperative agro-industrial economy in rural areas is essential". It extended government's operations from manufacturing to trade, which it said government should enter "on an increasing scale according to the needs of the economy. It not only preserved but expanded the scope for the public sector's pre-manufacturing industries from less than two per cent at the start of the First Plan and a little over eight per cent in the Second to a



projected 25 per cent at the end of the Third; to mineral production from less than 10 per cent to more than 30 per cent. Overall investment in the public sector had already increased from \$ 400 million a year at the start of the First Plan to \$ 900 million a year at the end, and to an average of \$ 1,600 million in the Second; the Third Plan raised the average to nearly \$ 3,200 million. In the First Plan the public sector's share in the total investment was about 50 per cent, in the Second 54 per cent, in the Third a little over 60 per cent. As the total investment in the Third Plan was \$ 20,800 million, a little more than the combined investment in the first and second, the public sector's share now really amounted to a very sizeable base for its future growth in keeping with the third Plan's forecast that it is "expected to grow both absolutely and in comparison and at a faster rate than the private sector". Accordingly the Third Plan gave to the public sector a well over 50 per cent share in the total investment in the organised sector of industry — \$ 2,680 million as against \$ 2,250 million for the private sector.

The shift in favour of industry as against other heads is even more marked. In an analysis of the fifteen years of planning during the First, Second and Third Plans, Phiroze B. Medhora of the Industrial Credit and Development Corporation of India showed that the "total investment in the economy" had increased "from 5% of national income in 1950-51 to a likely 14% in 1965-66". In this process, the proportion of outlay allocated to industry and mining was raised from 9.3% under the First Plan to 22.7% under the second and 24.4% under the third. Or, to put it in other words, while total investment increased from \$ 6,720 million under the First Plan to \$ 20,800 million under the Third Plan, or by 3.1 times, investment in industry increased from \$ 586 million to \$ 4910 million, or by 8.4 times". The Third Plan investment in industry "was roughly equivalent to the total volume of investment made in industry till 1960-61, that is it involved a doubling of the industrial structure in the country".

The proper place for considering production trends and their problems—and the problem of foreign aid, though already it had become serious in the second half of the Second Plan—is later.<sup>1</sup> But an outline of the trend during the first two Plans

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 288-91 and 439-44.

would reduce to its proper perspective the criticism, a little later in these pages, of the conceptual shortcomings of the first three Plans. National income increased by 42 per cent during the first ten years of planning (though the increase in population reduced the increase in per capita income to about 16 per cent); but of greater interest was the shift within it. While the income from agriculture and related sources, together accounting for nearly half the national income, increased by a little over a third, that from organized industry was doubled and from the investment goods industry kept well above the average, indicating a clear shift of the economic base towards industry.

Agriculture, still dependent upon unpredictable weather, fluctuated a great deal—it did much better in the First Plan than the second—but in the decade as a whole showed a 41 per cent increase (foodgrains 46 per cent). Consumption of fertilisers increased by 318 per cent, irrigated area by 36 per cent. The index of industrial production rose by 94 per cent and within that of steel by 150 per cent, aluminium by 400 per cent, graded machine tools by 158 per cent, iron ore by 234 per cent. In contrast, and as a statistical consequence of the low priority given to traditional consumption items, mill-made cloth output rose only by 38 per cent. New industrial items were produced for the first time: industrial boilers, milling machines, tractors, industrial explosives, sulphur and anti-biotic drugs, DDT, newsprint, motor cycles and scooters, dyestuffs and staple fibres and several other intermediate industrial goods.

The number of students in school went up by 85 per cent, from 23·5 million to 43·5 million, universities increased from 27 to 46, colleges from 542 to 1,050, and the number of students in colleges and institutions of technical training rose from 10,000 in 1950-51 to 39,400 in 1960-61. So the shortcomings of this decade were less in performance than in concepts.<sup>1</sup>

One set of concepts, about foreign aid, began to change rapidly for the better from about the middle of the Second Plan period. Unfortunately for India's economy and for Indo-American relations, America's views on foreign aid had dipped into their worst phase (from India's point of view) just about

<sup>1</sup> See pp 291-97 and 300-01.

the time that planned development was getting into gear in this country. They had put on the repulsive aspect of the cold war. If aid had remained a part of the short-sighted strategy of Dulles, India would have found it impossible to accept it even if her destiny had not been in the hands of such a proud and sensitive person as Nehru. And before the influence of Dulles abated, the Indian planning programme had put on an appearance which was equally out of touch with Indian realities and American preference.

But it became clear before too late that the appearance only reflected domestic exigencies of rhetoric, not carefully chosen real objectives. What was real about Nehru's socialism was not something to which anyone could object, and even Washington ceased to after a time; what was unreal soon came to be regarded as such. The realization became more widespread in India that foreign aid, including private foreign investment, had a crucial role to play, and in the United States that the Indian effort deserved support. The essence of the new appreciation in India was that a period of dependence upon foreign aid was necessary in order to shake off the dependence upon it later.

This was not a very novel view for India to take. As far back as 1949 Nehru, explaining the Government's thinking at that time, had said: "The stress on the need to regulate, in the national interest, the scope and manner of foreign capital, arose from past association of foreign capital and control with foreign domination of the economy of the country. But circumstances today are quite different. Indian capital needs to be supplemented by foreign capital, not only because our national savings will not be enough for the rapid development of the country on the scale we wish but also because in many cases scientific, technical and industrial knowledge and capital equipment can best be secured along with foreign capital....As regards existing foreign interests, the Government do not intend to place any restrictions or impose any conditions which are not applicable to similar Indian enterprise". The change however was that from its being an occasionally expressed view it was becoming a matter of settled policy.

The essence of the new appreciation abroad was bluntly stated in 1963 by H. K. S. Lindsay, at that time Vice-Chairman

of the Indian Management Association and later Chairman of the Associated Chambers of Commerce, the largest association of industrialists in India, that "in the Indian context one must be careful to distinguish between political tub thumping for the benefit of a domestic audience and the actual policy to which the Government stands committed, a kind of dichotomy not unknown in other, maturer, democracies". In more specific appraisals it appeared, as to the First National City Bank of New York, that there was now in India "a new awareness of the positive role that private enterprise can play in economic development", and, to the World Bank mission in 1960, that the objectives of the Third Plan, larger than the first and second put together, were not unduly ambitious.

To these general observations were added the actual experience of several investors that "socialism" operated in India only in fields which required high investment and low profitability; that highly profitable manufacturing industries were on the other hand open to private investment in a protected market with little insecurity; that considering the protected profits available the taxes were less onerous than they seemed, and even such inequities as they did at one time impose were being removed in the early sixties as John Lewis testified. As he says in *Quiet Crisis in India*, after a decade of planning under the banner of this mixed economy he found "the accelerated depreciation and investment-credit features of the Indian tax law are among the world's most liberal"; and "it is hard to believe that the average level of company income taxes, which is substantially lower than in the United States, is too high for a nation with India's need for revenue for development, especially when protection against competitive imports so reduces the risks and enhances the profits of domestic production".

*THE VOTERS' PREFERENCE*

IT WOULD have been very surprising indeed if the decade of the 'fifties had not produced a sharp interaction between the political process on the one hand—the state of the parties, their professions and performance, their standing with the people—and the economic on the other: planning and the increasing articulation of its social values. The interaction was indeed vigorous; it sharpened the outlines of popular preference and the viewpoint of the parties. There are some important exceptions to this statement—the Congress continues to defy all attempts to classify it and on the political spectrum between the Right and the Left it still occupies an enormous and undefinable area; much of the behaviour of some other parties is irresponsible, undeserving of a place on any constitutional scale, some voting habits have less to do with politics than ancestral superstition. But far more notable is it that clear definitions have speedily developed, and in terms which are not only now familiar in India but are not very different from those familiar in the West.

At the beginning of the 'fifties it would have been difficult to imagine how far the change would have gone by the middle. Attachment to religious and revivalist traditions was believed to be so strong that it was thought anyone who spoke in the terminology of modern politics would proceed straight to disaster. Hence it appeared that in the 1952 elections the challenge to the Congress would come from the Right, and not from the Right as the West understands the word—a modern party of economic conservation—but from an obscurantist combination of feudal overlords and priests. There were plenty of both in India; both had influence on multitudes of people and had scores to settle with the Congress: princes, landlords, the social no-changers inside the Congress or outside who were more akin to Purushottamdas Tandon than to Nehru. Nehru believed this combination to be not only bad but strong, and concentrated upon it all the fire of his astonishingly

vigorous campaign. He pitted against it the government's programme of social change, the Plan and the secular and egalitarian ideals written into the Constitution. Of course there was much to cloud the issues: personality, always a strong factor in Indian politics and strongest at this time; too many parties—77—which blurred the choice placed before the voter; caste and communal, even tribal, affiliations; a certain proportion of people who did not know what the elections were about in any case.

But out of all parties which had an all-India platform the progressive parties with a socialist programme did far better than those which derived their inspiration from Hinduism's golden age of long ago. Apart from the Congress, which took 45 per cent of the vote in parliamentary elections (42.36 per cent in elections in State Assemblies), the Socialists took 10.56 per cent. The Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (a newly formed combination, largely of social democrats) took 5.87 per cent, and the Communists 5.06 per cent. The Jan Sangh, which had nailed Hindu traditions and culture to its mast, polled only 3.05 per cent, and much of that too because of its militancy towards Pakistan and declared intention of reuniting India, which must have appealed a great deal to people still licking the wounds they had suffered in the partition riots and still looking back with longing to what they had left behind. The Hindu Mahasabha, in a sense a progenitor of the Jan Sangh, got 0.91 per cent votes for its programme of establishing "Hindu Raj in Bharat with a form of government in accordance with Hindu polity and economy". The Ram Rajya Parishad, in some ways a more vigorous party than the Mahasabha, committed to preserving castes and classes, collected 1.98 per cent. Including local and regional parties, those to the Left of centre polled 20 million votes; those to the Right only about half as many. And in the former group, democratic socialist parties took more than twice the votes of the Communists.

These figures do not lose their meaning merely because caste and personality were also factors in the elections; they were so for all parties. Subsequent evolution also shows that these results were not a freak. This is not to suggest that either these or subsequent results have yielded a very clear political map of the Indian electorate. Many confusions persist. Nobody yet

knows what lies in that white unexplored area where reside the 30 to 40 per cent of the voters who do not at present vote. Their numbers would make a vital but hitherto unpredictable difference to future elections. Also unpredictable are the 20 per cent or so who voted for unattached "independent" candidates, whose allegiance to any political party or point of view is indefinable. And then there is the formlessness of the Congress platform, which its bitterest critic B. R. Ambedkar described as "open to all fools and knaves, friends and foes, communalists and secularists, reformers and orthodoxists, capitalists and anti-capitalists".

Nevertheless, certain points of departure clearly stood out at the end of this election and they have been a considerable influence on all that has followed: that for all its massiveness, the Congress does not poll even half the total votes; that its very diffuseness is an advantage for it, making it so flexible that it can absorb all shocks and easily adjust itself to the prevailing winds; that the voters, preference is broadly for the politics of the Left, especially for its more democratic forms, and clothes at least mildly dyed in its hue must be donned, sincerely or otherwise, even by parties, such as *ad hoc* parties with a fixed local purpose, whose objectives have little to do with the modern classifications of all-India politics. (Two examples of this are the DMK in Madras and the Akali Dal in Punjab, two particularist parties with no national objectives, which have played host to Leftist ideas.) Even the vote of the "Independents" does not invalidate this statement; on analysis it is seen to be essentially the vote for the "good man" of local influence; when it is released from his orbit, for example into other elections in the area in which he is not interested, it immediately falls into the overall political pattern of the area.

Between the first and the second elections in 1957, and in marked contrast with what happened between the second and the third, the Congress and therefore Indian politics in general acquired a distinctly Leftward but democratic look. Professed allegiance to democracy became practically universal once the Communists, seeing that the ballot-box had served them much better than the Telangana rebellion—they won the third and fourth largest block of votes in State Assembly and parliamentary elections, second largest block of seats in both—began

to concede that elections had their uses too.

Leftward inclination automatically followed. Economic conservatism, which might have opposed it and after the second elections did, was at that time in the camp of the communal and religious parties, and concealed in silence its embarrassment at being there. But even if it had been more free to speak it would have had very little to say till the late 'fifties, when for the first time it found in the Nagpur resolutions something against which it could work up some fire. Having found its tongue it could then attack many things and from the early 'sixties did. But between the first two elections it was at a triple disadvantage. Political debate was getting more and more wrapped up in the economic, especially from about 1954 when the drafting of the second and much bigger Plan started: and no one who wished to have mass appeal for the voter could afford to take a rightist position in this. Later on it was different: planning became more precise, and without having to oppose the general direction—which is about the only thing that the First Plan had—a party could oppose specific provisions; also, as economic interests began to develop and diversify during the Second Plan period and later, conservatism found a political hinterland to nourish it. Until then to be against the Plan was not very different from being for poverty and the pervasive backwardness of the economy.

Secondly, the Right could not pick up any supporting cast in the Congress, which is what it could do eminently well in the 'sixties. The Congress quickly polished up its socialistic image after seeing in the first elections how weak the Right was and at least potentially how strong the Left. Therefore, there were not many people within the Congress who were willing to take up the Rightist cry from without the walls. This situation was accentuated by the mid-term elections held in Andhra early in 1955. The Congress faced a strong challenge there from the Communists in 1952. In response, the Congress fielded in 1955 not only its cleverest election manager, S. K. Patil, but a manifesto with a strong agrarian bias (a Rightist manager and a Leftist manifesto is not unusual ambidexterity for the Congress). The manifesto said the Congress would impose ceilings on land holdings, break up large revenue estates which the Nizam had awarded to his loyal followers, protect



tenants against evictions, guarantee remunerative and stable agricultural prices and minimum wages for agricultural labour, and let all land policies be decided by an agricultural board on which tenants would have their representatives. In other words the Congress stole the clothes of the Communists and defeated them resoundingly, proving once again that in Indian conditions—as probably in most others—the best antidote to Communism is the milder socialism of the Congress.

By the same process the Congress spread such confusion among the Socialists that their state throughout the 'fifties was pitiable. Two of the best known socialists fell out with each other and their party broke up precisely on the issue of its attitude to the Congress. Ram Manohar Lohia, the stormiest non-Communist in Indian politics and brilliant at polemics, urged opposition to the Congress on all issues and everywhere; Jayaprakash Narain, better known as "J. P." and to some as the Hamlet of Indian socialism, wanted opposition suspended where otherwise the result would be defeat of the Congress by the Communists or communalists. Two years earlier there had even been negotiations between Nehru and J.P. for institutional partnership between their parties; nothing came out of it except that the socialist leader lost the momentum he was gaining, and whether this was Nehru's purpose or not is one of the unsolved murder mysteries of Indian politics.

The Rightists' third disadvantage came from the direction India's foreign policy had taken, and almost equally from its successes and failure. There was such glamour in non-alignment throughout the 'fifties, such warmth for the Soviet Union and China, and such chilly misgivings about the United States which had become a military ally of Pakistan, that any party which by deduction from its domestic, especially economic policy could be regarded in foreign affairs as sympathetic to Washington, had little chance of catching the popular imagination. The only Rightist party which could have been immune against this danger was the Jan Sangh; it was so militantly opposed to Pakistan that its support for the United States would not have been misunderstood. But the Jan Sangh was caught in the coils of its own troubles: its President, Maulichandra Sharma, resigned in 1954 in protest against the admission of RSS members; this he held contrary to what he believed to be the party's

"secular nationalism" and "loyalty to democracy". Some more of its leaders resigned on the same issue in 1955. The Right therefore approached the 1957 elections with no particular grail to go after and no one particularly well qualified to go after it in any case.

The Communists were in reasonably good fettle. In the mid-term elections in Andhra they had lost almost two-thirds of their seats (because the Congress succeeded in "united front" tactics of its own and prevented non-Communist vote being split as in previous elections); but they increased their share of the popular vote to 30 per cent (from what is not very clear, because in 1952 Andhra had different boundaries). In the mid-term elections in Travancore-Cochin the Communists won enough votes and seats to force a stalemate on the Congress, for whom Nehru had campaigned with great vigour.

The confidence with which the Communists approached the 1957 elections was justified by the results. They won power in Kerala, (new name for Travancore-Cochin and some other territories which were added to it) counted 12 million voters on their side in the country as a whole, doubled their popular vote in parliamentary elections, from 5 per cent to 10 per cent, and more than doubled it in the State elections, from just under 4½ per cent to 10½ per cent, rose in West Bengal from 10 to 18 per cent and in Punjab from 6 to 15 per cent, increased their seats from 16 to 27 in Lok Sabha and from 106 to 176 in State assemblies as a whole. For the first time they could claim now that they were truly an all-India party, not a string of strongly held pockets.

At the opposite end the Jan Sangh too doubled its popular vote and made useful gains in the Hindi heartland, U. P. and Madhya Pradesh. Like the Communists, the Jana Sangh also ate up its neighbours in its own part of the spectrum, the area of religious orthodoxy; it vanquished the contenders, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Ram Rajya Parishad, and became the dominant voice of the Hindu Right. Of all the trends in the three general elections this is the clearest. But unlike the Communists the Jana Sangh remained a party of a few strong local bases.

On the other hand, the PSP, one of the two main end products of a decade of complicated fissions and fusions among the

socialists (the other is Lohia's SSP) lost such hope as it might have had. It had started the quinquennium with a platform crowded with many able, attractive and important leaders but with only a disorganized rabble on the floor. And it paid the price. As the 1957 elections showed, and even more those in 1962, victory now demands an organization which is broad and deep. The PSP had none and lost all its 1952 lead. Its vote declined by one-third from the 1952 share of roughly 15 per cent both in central and State elections though the number of seats remained largely steady, thanks to the number of popular leaders it had (exactly the reverse of the Jan Sangh's assets). In 1962 it fell back further: its parliamentary vote declined from 10.41 per cent to 6.84 per cent and seats from 19 to 12; in State elections from 9.75 per cent to 7.69 per cent and from 208 to 179.

In all these respects (except votes per candidate, 117,000) the Congress figures were immensely higher: 75.1 per cent seats and 47.78 per cent votes (nearly three per cent more than in 1952) in central elections, and 64.9 per cent seats (a fall of 3.5 per cent) and 44.97 per cent votes (a rise of 2.7 per cent) in State elections. In 1962 the Congress showed more uniform but still very marginal declines: in parliamentary elections it took 73.1 per cent seats and 46.02 per cent votes; in State elections 60.2 per cent seats and 43.53 per cent votes. But the decline notwithstanding, the figures are such that they make comparison of party strengths with it rather meaningless. There was also the temporary turbulence over linguistic states, discussed a little later,<sup>1</sup> which confused long-term indicators for the time being, especially in Bombay. But the significance of the results, and of the electoral processes as a whole, lay in establishing certain trends which are best seen if, by telescoping chronology, the 1962 election results are also brought in.

The comparison confirmed the hope which only a few held once, that ballot-box democracy is not unworkable in India; over the three elections it showed increasing viability and refinement. Voter participation rose from about 46 per cent to nearly 60 per cent. The number of parties in the running in central elections fell from 77 to less than a fourth as many, with

<sup>1</sup> See pp 212-14.

a corresponding fall in the States. The independents' and minor parties' share of the vote in Lok Sabha elections fell from 26.9 per cent (more than half the share of the Congress) in the 1952 elections to 24.2 per cent in 1957 and 18.60 per cent in 1962. The number of Independents elected declined from 58 in 1951 to 25 in 1962. Their independence declined even more precipitately: they were generally adopted by one or more often a combination of Opposition parties; after election they behaved more like party candidates than the lone wolves they were.

On the other hand the share of the main organized parties went up. The top six of the table polled, in the central election, 67.8 per cent voters in 1952, 73.4 per cent in 1957 and 78.5 per cent in 1962; in the State elections 64.1 per cent, 67.68 per cent, and 75.91 per cent. Of the seats, the six took 82.6 per cent, 85.1 per cent, and 89 per cent, and 78.8 per cent, again 78.8 per cent, and 82.2 per cent (the lower share of seats and votes in the States and the slower rise of both were to be expected because it is in the States that the smaller parties have most scope). There were no violent shifts in the voters' preference: the Congress remained a large, steady and steady-ing factor in the middle, and the shift, such as it was, remained for fifteen years more or less of the kind one would expect in a country in which the dominant political philosophy had been democratic socialism and the dominant economic practice a "mixed economy", both swinging slowly within a fairly limited range.

The result of none of the three elections was a great deal other than might have been expected. Some constituencies sprang surprises but hardly any large area of State, and there was no reason to suspect that the overall picture anywhere was an aberration. Covering two general elections fairly intensively as a journalist I found it to be a phenomenon of absorbing interest that the political scene went through a transformation as the observation shifted from the particular to the general. Close to the ground it seemed in all constituencies that the result would depend upon purely local factors: the caste of the voters and the candidate, personal record of the rivals, some local grievance or achievement. Canvassers and pollsters would hardly talk of the prospects of different parties—they talked

only of the candidates'—or the appeal of broader issues. But viewing any sizeable number of constituencies together, especially a State or a well-defined region of it as a whole, the estimates would emerge only in the broader terms of how many seats for which party; so would the reasons, such as party promises and performance.

The estimates were not conspicuously more or less accurate at one level than at the other; but at the lower level the forecasters' hazards were purely Indian, at the higher level they were generally those which are familiar the world over—the unpredictability of the voter and miscalculation about particular factors. But well-informed estimates made at the higher level were by and large right, disproving that there was any excessive preponderance of purely local factors. Particularly after the 1957 elections, it became still more clear that as an influence on the overall results, factors of purely limited and local significance were yielding place to the broader issues of much larger relevance, forcing political parties to define their policies.

To some extent this happened because with the rapidly rising pace and cost of elections, smaller parties and groups fell by the way, and with them their particular concerns and local hobby horses. To some extent because of the logic of the electoral procedure: parliamentary elections are simultaneously held all over the country, and nearly everywhere simultaneously with elections to the State assemblies also (the exception are States where for some reason or other mid-term elections might have been necessary). And thirdly because all-India parties, which are the main participants to the increasing exclusion of others, began to acquire an increasingly large stake in the country as a whole, and most of them have continued to do so since then. Since whatever they say is nowadays heard and read all over the country, they cannot afford the luxury, as local parties can, of tailoring their manifestos and campaigns to purely local circumstances; even less can they say anything to one area or community which may cost them precious votes in another. This is forcing national issues on their attention, and obliging them to take on each issue a comprehensive stand consistent with their interests in the country as a whole, which after all is what a national policy and platform for a party mean. Besides, the issues themselves, especially the economic,

have grown so greatly in their urgency and importance that no part of the country is beyond the reach of their impact. This increasing pre-eminence of all-India issues and parties has favourable implications for Indian unity which are often not noticed abroad, where breakaway tendencies receive more attention. Undoubtedly the latter still exist, especially at the periphery, but in the national context mean much less than they used to.

The confusing, innumerable fragments of the early 'fifties would not have resolved into a simpler and bolder pattern of fewer issues and parties, or at least their resolution would not have gone very far beyond the stage it had reached in the 1957 elections, if a party of the Right which could properly be so called had not come into being. Parties which till then had been mistaken to be of the Right were only parties of social and religious conservatism; their economic viewpoint was not only nebulous but self-contradictory, the Jan Sangh's, for example, which stands undecided between authoritarian conservatism, democratic free enterprise and populist economics. The Swatantra Party came in 1959 and filled this gap—partly.

The Swatantra Party had strong tail winds in its favour. The Nagpur resolutions on cooperative farming, which it cleverly misrepresented as the beginning of land nationalization by the Congress, aroused strong opposition even among middle and lower farmers, the new allies of the Congress. If it could wean them away it would be assured of a rural base. As if to encourage its hopes, the first success it won was that the Krishikar Lok Party of N. G. Ranga, a peasant group locally influential in Andhra, which had joined the Congress at the time of the Andhra elections, withdrew from it to become the local spear-head of the Swatantra; Ranga became Chairman of the party and its foremost politician after the founder and chief patron, Rajagopalachari. It had reason to be hopeful about the towns as well. The numerous community of medium-scale business and commerce had very little for which it could thank "mixed economy"; it was the most affected by rules and regulations and longing for a bit of fresh air and free enterprise.

But with so much in its favour the Swatantra party muffed it: it fell between two stools. Either it should have tried to become a party in the true sense, with its own cadres, platform

and organization; the task would have been arduous but the party, when ready, would have been a force. Or it should have become a lobby, for which its galaxy of some very able people and the favourable climate of public opinion equipped it well; it would have become the cogent spokesman outside the walls for a point of view influentially but not always very vocally held inside the Congress, given the latter encouragement in the kind of combination which experience has shown to be best for steering the Congress in the desired direction.

But instead of doing either the Swatantra party tried to become a party without having to work for it. It unfurled its flag and recklessly solicited all and sundry to come and sit beneath it; before it knew what was happening it became a Noah's Ark, not a party. Communalists came, such as the Akali Dal in Punjab (which also had one leg in the peasant wing of the Communist party), princes and landlords and other remnants of a rejected order came, even a tribal party came, on which ticket the General Secretary of the Swatantra Party was able at last to get elected to the Lok Sabha, some stragglers of no particular description came, and some generals came who had either never had an army or had lost it in other battles. The party lost its coherence as a lobby and its distinctive character as a platform. The cause it was supposed to represent—modern, progressive and free enterprise capital—disappeared somewhere in the many folds of its flag.

The only excuse it could offer for this reckless mismatching was that the Congress had done it too and had prospered. But what a party in power can do to lure and drop people at a time of its choosing a party in the opposition cannot do; it has few rewards to offer. In fact the biggest mistake the party made was to meet the Congress on grounds of the latter's choosing; the Congress played havoc by stepping up the bid. The Swatantra Party was able to get many legislators elected on its ticket—18 in Lok Sabha and 170 in State assemblies with a 6.8 per cent and 6.49 per cent share of the votes—but it is doubtful whether many of them would be considered as their representatives by the captains of industry and the leaders of corporations. Most of the latter came round to the view that their interests would be better served by their capacity to influence the Government through their own lobbies than through

the open and sometimes rash opposition of the Swatantra Party.

The evolution of the Left between the second and third general elections, even more than between the first and the second, revolved around the fortunes of the Communist Party. The non-Communist Left continued to be decimated by the malady characteristic of the socialists: a far greater readiness to divide than unite, far more debate than work in the field. Indian socialists are especially prone to this ailment. They have no incentive to combine with any one since there is no chance that by doing so they can capture power; when the chance recedes further, as it did in 1957, the desire becomes stronger to huddle together in homogenous and intimate groups, the smaller the better, than to widen the party on the basis of a minimum common programme. The leaders of the socialist parties played this game to their hearts' content after 1957, and by 1962 had reduced themselves to a position of little consequence.

The Communists on the other hand showed far greater vigour, whether in faction fights (especially from the early 'sixties on) or work in the field, and in both respects were the only group worth watching. They more than offset their reverse in the Andhra elections in 1955 by capturing power in Kerala in 1957. It is true that they were unable to keep it for long: the Central Government, by means which many regarded as unfair, squeezed them out of office; the Congress, by tactics of alliance which were highly opportunistic, wrested back power in the mid-term elections in 1960, reducing the Communist strength in the legislature by 36 seats.

The election was furiously fought: voter participation shot up to 85 per cent, in some constituencies to 94 per cent, minor parties and individuals virtually disappeared, carrying the all-India trend another step forward. The Congress sent in its heaviest guns for the campaign, but when the results came out the Communists were found to be stronger than before: they had increased their vote by over one million and their share in the total from 39 per cent to 43 per cent (the average of the vote by which the Congress captured power in all the States in 1962 was only half of one per cent higher). In spite of a tremendous agitation and campaign against the Communist Government by the Congress, including its President, Indira



Gandhi, and by the Central Government, including her father, the Prime Minister, the Communists appeared not to have lost any support. In the following years they expanded it still further: in the 1962 elections for Parliament from Kerala the Communists lost two Lok Sabha seats but increased their share of the vote from 35 per cent in 1957 to 43.81 per cent, while the Congress vote declined from 37.6 per cent to 34.44 per cent. In 1965 they were the top party in State assembly elections.<sup>1</sup> And "they" here means the Left and allegedly pro-Peking faction of the party, not Right, which won only two seats and was routed.

The Communists stuck to what was paying them—parliamentary methods. In their theoretical formulations they fluctuated somewhat. From the Palghat thesis in April 1956—"lending support to the Government's domestic and foreign policies while striving to build up a united front with all the opposition groups"—to the Ajoy Ghosh "Two Systems" thesis of November 1956—"the parliamentary form of government will be retained"—to the Amritsar thesis of April 1958—"to unite and lead all democratic forces in the country in the struggle for defence and consolidation of national freedom" but with no references made to inevitable revolutions and the dictatorship of the proletariat—to the Meerut thesis in November 1959—"complete lack of faith in the slogan of left unity adopted at Amritsar" but with advocacy of "closer links with the democratic forces working within the Congress under Mr. Nehru's leadership" (these forces were to come a cropper pitifully exactly three years later). But their working cadres carried unfusedly on, overcoming the embarrassments of Chinese attacks on India, the Sino-Soviet rift and the resulting split in the party. They held their position in 1962: two seats more in the parliamentary elections than in 1957, share of the vote which was only 0.7 per cent less than in 1957; in State elections 21 more seats and 0.7 per cent more votes. Except the growing internal split, and competition between factions for building themselves up by an increasing show of militancy, there was nothing to show after 1962 that the Communists had stopped doing what everyone now needed to: work his way up through the ballot-box.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 367.

Nothing except what began to happen in West Bengal in 1966. The exception is important and portentous; it is mainly responsible for the title of this book, as a later<sup>1</sup> discussion shows. But in spite of some resounding defeats inflicted upon Congress candidates by combinations of Opposition parties, the third elections at any rate did not reveal any general threat to the Congress developing out of the Opposition strategy. In fact the Congress could take comfort in the failure of some complicated efforts by the Opposition parties to pool their resources on the eve of the second and third general elections. The prospect has been briefly discussed in Chapter 15. But the retrospect showed the differences between the Opposition parties to be as marked as, and in some cases much more than, their differences with the Congress.

By and large, Opposition parties, especially of the Left since they have a sharper ideological definition than the Congress, found it more difficult to evolve even limited understandings. The P.S.P., both frightened and suspicious of the lead element, the Communist Party, which was itself about to split, made one big gap in a Left coalition; another was made by the Lohia Socialists who had an ambivalent attitude towards coalitions and would have as easily joined hands with the Jana Sangh in some States as with the Communists in others. The Jana Sangh and the Swatantra Parties were more compatible but together would have been tarred as Rightists, reactionaries, revisionists or whatever is worse in that kind of vocabulary. An emerging trend in the Jana Sangh, towards a somewhat more progressive view of the economy, could have removed some of this taint; but the Swatantra Party would have probably considered this a concession to socialism, and turned away from a coalition. The PSP could have given them respectability in the eyes of non-aligned voters. But it was as reluctant to join them as to join an alliance led by the Communists.

A bigger difficulty for the Opposition showed up in the consequences of polarization on its side of the fence. When Left splinters joined up, so did the Right; they weakened each other in favour of the Congress. Or some of the smaller Right parties joined hands with the Congress to form a stronger anti-Com-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 460.

munist alliance. A special extension of this problem was seen in West Bengal where almost all the Opposition parties are to the Left of the Congress and over the three general elections have come closer together. But victory continued to elude them in 1962 also. As the middle, indeterminate vote flowed out to the ends, the consolidated opposition got some but so did the Congress. According to a painstaking analysis by Ashok Mitra in the Economic Weekly of Bombay in 1952, the Congress polled only 38.9 per cent of the vote, in 1957 46.4 per cent, and in 1962 47.19 per cent. In 1952, a two per cent swing against the Congress candidate and in favour of the main contending candidate would have cost the Congress 23 seats and its majority in the legislature. In 1957 a 2.5 per cent swing would have been needed and in 1962 3.5 per cent. The main Opposition vote improved faster than the Congress, but brought it no closer to power.

## NON-ALIGNED INDIA

It is unfortunate that books have to be written in chapters and not all their pages can be read in the same instant; sometimes this divides what is in fact indivisible. What ought to be treated as an integral whole is reduced instead to a scheme of segments. Most true is this of the division books make between domestic and foreign policy, which in modern times have become so intertwined that it is hard to see where one begins and the other ends. In India's case, for example, the overriding domestic necessity is economic growth, one of the strongest issues in domestic politics is Kashmir; yet hardly perceptible is the line which divides them from foreign policy. Containing Communism is a problem with two faces for India. One is the face of India's own poor masses, the other of the ambitious men in Peking; the two inter-act. Even when the Chinese face was kinder, domestic Communism responded to foreign policy: next only to his own charisma, what most helped Nehru to bid the impoverished Indian be patient was the circus of non-alignment. For quite some time India truly believed she was going places as one world leader after another came through the swinging portals of Nehru's political hospitality; they outdid each other in their praise of his deeds, as suitors do before the commitment comes, and in proportion the hunger in Indian stomachs abated.

But in the case of so international-minded a national leader as Nehru it is best to give his foreign policy separate treatment on its own—which of course is making a virtue of the author's necessity to find some way of arranging his material!—and by the same incomplete logic to treat it in parts: his handling of relations with immediate neighbours, the Afro-Asians, China, and the two world leaders, the USA and the Soviet Union. Intertwined though they are, and all part of his world view which was outlined earlier,<sup>1</sup> they are sufficiently distinct in

<sup>1</sup> See—*A Place in the World*.

colour to be traceable up and down through much of their length.

Looking back from a point this side of the second war between India and Pakistan in the summer of 1965, which was itself only the culmination of a prolonged state of near-war conditions, it is surprising to be able to record that probably with no other country did Nehru have so many summit dialogues as with Pakistan, and that many of them were far from barren. In fact so many agreements were arrived at and so many flash points cooled that were the context not so unhelpful as the endless dispute over Kashmir, they would almost have looked like examples of developing good neighbourliness. But with things as they were, neither the dialogues nor agreements led to much permanent good.

In July 1953, Nehru went to Karachi for two-day talks with Mohammad Ali, the new Prime Minister, who had once described Nehru as his "elder brother", to give a poor translation of a term which in the original has a much warmer mixture of affection and respect. From the people of Karachi he received a welcome such as no city outside India could equal; by this he confessed he was "deeply moved". The talks ranged over more than a hundred subjects which had been processed for days by a joint committee of some of the seniormost officials of the two countries. The Prime Ministers declared the talks to be "frank and cordial". Even about Kashmir they found it possible to say "a clearer understanding of each other's point of view" was reached—how often the two countries were to say this in later years;—and "ground prepared for further talks" (and this too). From the point where the Prime Ministers left off the officials continued. Next month Mohammad Ali came to New Delhi, received a similar ovation from the people and one from Members of Parliament too, had "frank and free" talks on Kashmir with Nehru; the two made a joint appeal for "an era of goodwill" because both countries attached "the greatest importance to this friendly approach". Mohammad Ali even allowed himself the optimistic forecast that a "complete solution" of the Kashmir question would be reached within a year though its full implementation would take "a little longer." Throughout the year which followed there was profuse correspondence between the two leaders on all differences.

With Mohammad Ali's successor, Chaudhuri Mohammed Ali, Nehru had no personal meeting but in their long-distance discussions through public statements and governmental exchanges the two countries came closer than at any time before Nehru's death to agreeing to a joint declaration that they would not go to war against each other. The personal dialogue was resumed with Pakistan's next Prime Minister, Sir Feroze Khan Noon, in September 1958, and would have continued, with Noon or his successors, if a prolonged period of instability had not ensued in Pakistan during which it was far from clear who held the decision-making power. But as soon as a clear leader emerged in Ayub Khan summit talks were held again, in September 1960. This was the last meeting between Nehru and Ayub before China so disastrously took a direct hand in the affairs of the sub-continent. The talks were at least as successful by all accounts as any previous round. Apart from the decisions taken, the cordiality appears to have been remarkable. Nehru said he had come with "a message of friendship and hope of closer cooperation". He praised the Indus Waters Treaty, which was signed during this visit, and said "greater than the material advantages are the psychological and emotional benefits. It is a symbol of unity and cooperation between the two neighbouring countries". Ayub also exuded goodwill: "I have no doubt that if we work in the same spirit and harmony it will promote trust and understanding between the peoples of the two countries."

On Kashmir these discussions produced only, or at best, expressions of optimism about a "peaceful" and "satisfactory" settlement which later events were to prove to be wholly without basis. Not so, however, on other issues. In March 1953 an earlier trade agreement was expanded and extended. Three months later an agreement was reached on travel and transit through the two countries. In March 1954 they announced willingness to settle their long-standing and ruinous dispute over canal waters in accordance with proposals made by the World Bank; when the detailed agreement was signed in 1960 it was seen to be one of the most thoroughgoing international documents of this nature. Decision to resume rail services by each country through the other was announced in April 1955. To prevent border incidents were devised in May 1955. In

tember 1958 "considerable progress" in securing peace on the eastern frontier was announced, and in October 1959, complete agreement about detailed steps. A similar agreement about the western front was reached and announced in January and December, 1960.

The joint communique issued by Nehru and Ayub after their meetings in September anticipated in some detail and by five years an order of priorities which, when it was set out in the Tashkent Declaration in 1966 was hailed almost unanimously throughout India but in 1960 passed almost unnoticed. The two leaders said they were convinced that "the primary need of the two countries was the rapid development of their resources and the raising of the living standards of their peoples... They agreed that their governments and peoples should work for friendly and cooperative relations and eliminate old emotional strains and tensions. They recognised that reduction in tension and development of friendly and neighbourly cooperative relations will enable each of their countries to devote its energies to the achievement of their basic objectives of economic and social development".

In listing the disputes and differences to which they had decided to give priority of treatment they first mentioned "financial matters", then "broader agreements and border matters", then implementation of the Movable Properties Agreement already existing between them, then "scientific and technical matters" and "information on agricultural research", next exchange of information about the uses of water resources not covered by the Indus Treaty, trade and economic exchanges, especially purchase of Indian cement, iron and steel by Pakistan and of Pakistani jute, cotton, salt and gas by India. Kashmir was mentioned only at the end of the joint statement, and even then it was only said that "there was a frank and friendly exchange of views .... in an atmosphere of cordiality. It was agreed that this was a difficult question which required careful consideration of all aspects. The President and the Prime Minister agreed to give further thought to this question with a view to finding a solution". Given the proper occasion, background and persons, the two countries thus succeeded in hammering out in direct talks as good a document, as far as documents go, as any which third parties have succeeded in coaxing or coerc-

ing out of them.

Relations did not improve in spite of these agreements, and tension over Kashmir made most of them unworkable — the agreement on rail traffic for example never took effect. This probably supports Pakistan's view that India and Pakistan can never be normal neighbours until the Kashmir problem is settled. But it does not support the allegation often made, in India as much as anywhere else, that in relations with Pakistan Nehru was particularly obstinate and unyielding. The fact that he was a Kashmiri is cited as evidence that he was emotionally attached to Kashmir and would not give it to Pakistan. The only sense in which this inference might be true is that without emotional involvement someone else in his place might have avoided the two cardinal errors which he made: referring the fact of Pakistan's attack to the United Nations and making Kashmir's accession subject to an internationally supervised plebiscite. Sardar Patel is known to have opposed both these decisions. But until Kashmir did in fact accede to India Nehru, with the rest of his Cabinet colleagues, as is corroborated among others by Mountbatten, was not at all anxious to precipitate the accession and would have gladly accepted the State's accession to Pakistan if Kashmiris had wanted that. That would have been the stage for Nehru's attachment to Kashmir, if it had been an influence upon his policy, to have asserted itself.

Once the accession became a fact, any Indian Prime Minister would have been as exposed as Nehru was to the compulsions discussed earlier,<sup>1</sup> which prevented Nehru from facing the risk of losing Kashmir. Certainly that arch integrationist, Patel, who alone out of Nehru's contemporaries could have been thought of as Prime Minister in his place, would not have agreed to anything which would become the beginning of India's disintegration. On the contrary he, or anyone else not quite so concerned with the international repercussions of any decision, would have much sooner taken the stand which Nehru delayed for four years after Kashmir's internal affairs had taken the grave turn they did in the summer of 1953. These gave new dimensions to an already complicated problem. The controversy was now not only between India and Pakistan, it also became one between

<sup>1</sup> See p 55



ndian and Kashmiri opinion and at the same time started sending poisonous tentacles into the whole range of India's relations with the West.

In the spring the Jana Sangh, jointly with a Hindu organisation of Jammu, started an agitation for terminating the special status which Kashmir had been granted under the Constitution because of India's obligations to the United Nations. The United Nations had stipulated a standstill in Kashmir's relations with India, so that the State's accession remained limited to three subjects, which was the first stage of the accession of all states, and it could not be integrated as others had been. Before the agitation, Nehru had allowed himself to go only to the extent of persuading Sheikh Abdullah to accept the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and the Auditor-General—and this too upon the representation of many people in Kashmir that in his growing megalomania—and, some added, corruption—Sheikh Abdullah had thrown judicial and financial procedures to the winds.

The crisis which the agitation touched off began to boil over in the summer: Abdullah began to question the accession, and in May declared that "if the accession is dissolved the responsibility is with Hindu communalists who by demanding complete merger have shaken the foundations of Indo-Kashmir relations". Most of his Cabinet revolted against him, and in a memorandum to the head of State alleged that Abdullah was "seeking to precipitate a rupture of the State's relations with India . . . conditions of chaos are being created which would be fatal to the exercise of the right of self-determination . . . interested foreign powers may well take advantage of the situation for their own selfish purposes".

On the face of it this last would have been a reference to Pakistan, but other hints were obviously involved. The Vice-Premier of Kashmir, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, who became Prime Minister after Abdullah had been deposed and arrested, said that an "independent Kashmir", an idea the Sheikh had indirectly started advocating, "under the influence of an imperial power, will be a grave threat to the independence of the people of India and Pakistan . . . Another Korea may be staged here as the result of an armed conflict between interested powers". The complicity of the USA began to be hinted at

clearly, especially after a visit to Kashmir by Adlai Stevenson and the U.S. Ambassador in New Delhi, George Allen. The rumours fattened on India's known objection to the USA contributing many members of the UN team for observing the cease-fire line. The allegation gained currency that the headquarters of the UN Observers' team had become a centre of intrigue. The whispers became so embarrassing for the U.S. Embassy that it had to issue an official denial.

Whether the United States liked it or not, it was not only involved in the controversy now but getting deeper into it. Nehru had been harbouring the suspicion for some years that the United States was backing Pakistan even more than Britain was, destroying any chance there might be, that in the course of time Pakistan would recognize that it would be best to accept a compromise on such terms as were available. Writing to India's representative in the Security Council in 1950, Nehru said: "As for Kashmir, nothing much is happening and I rather doubt if much is going to happen in the near future. From information received from London, it appears that the UK Government is not at all anxious to do anything. In fact they want to tone down their part and not to irritate Indian opinion more than they have already done.... I understand that the United States are going to try their pressure tactics again. The only effect that this will have is to encourage Pakistan to start further aggression and indeed war. There are many indications of this happening in the not distant future. I think it should be made clear to everyone concerned that in this matter we cannot submit to any further bullying." These suspicions were harsh. But they were to get still more deeply embedded in Nehru's mind as a close parallel developed between the course of India's discussions with Pakistan over Kashmir and Pakistan's with the United States for a military pact.

The pact was not formally signed until May 19, 1954, but rumours that it was coming became current early the previous November, during a visit by the Governor-General and the Foreign Minister of Pakistan to the United States. On November 19 the Pakistani leaders described the rumours as "absolutely unfounded and baseless". But the United States confirmed them to the extent of saying the following day that "the question of military aid and bases was not discussed in detail". Moscow

thought this confirmation enough to ask officially for a "clarification" on November 30 while Nehru, less hesitant in drawing the obvious conclusion, announced India's "grave concern" on that date. Simultaneously Nehru and Mohammad Ali were in close correspondence about a plebiscite in Kashmir. As late as the first week of November the correspondence was about arrangements for a plebiscite: whether it should be regional or total, what should be the powers of the Plebiscite Administrator and whether he should be Admiral Nimitz, whom the United Nations had selected, or someone from a smaller country as Nehru wanted, to what extent the state could be demilitarized in the meantime, how should the dislocation of the people be minimized, and so on.

On December 10 the two lines of development crossed: Nehru told Pakistan that "it becomes rather absurd to talk of demilitarization (of Kashmir) if Pakistan proceeds in the reverse direction with the help of the United States", help which he described as "an unfriendly act". From December 21 he stepped up his objections: U.S. military aid to Pakistan had produced a "qualitative change in the existing situation". On January 18: India cannot decide about other policies until she knows "exactly how matters stand with regard to this military aid." On March 5: "the whole context of the Kashmir situation has been changed". It was only a matter of time now for the extent of this change to be spelt out. In March 1956, the SEATO Council discussed Kashmir, and Nehru riposted: "The reference to Kashmir can only mean that the military alliance is backing Pakistan". Next month Nehru disclosed that since military aid to Pakistan and its membership of military pacts had "destroyed the entire basis for a plebiscite in Kashmir" he had suggested to Pakistan that talks be held for demarcating the border on the basis of the present cease-fire line. Pakistan denounced the proposal as "preposterous" and India proceeded to take the next step: the Kashmir Constituent Assembly declared the State to be an integral part of India. One day before India's next Republic Day, on January 25, 1957, the integration was formally proclaimed and the Assembly dissolved.

The military involvement of the United States in this part of the world was tragic from many points of view. But it is difficult to determine what was its real impact on the gnarled

up problem of Kashmir. It is obvious that Kashmir was a part of the calculation in the minds of all parties. The United States could not have been unaware that its stand on Kashmir would play an important part in deciding how dependable an ally Pakistan would or would not be; once it had put down its expensive installation in Pakistan, and so long as it needed them there, it could not possibly think about Kashmir in any other way than it did even if it had wanted to. Pakistan's calculation, never obscure, was made quite obvious by Suhrawardy, its Prime Minister in 1957, who said: "We have given them (the USA) our wholehearted support, so we expect them to be wholeheartedly with us, and they will find that small as we are, they will not get greater and more loyal friends than ourselves." The unrest in Kashmir, one has always suspected, has grown directly in proportion to the availability of foreign interest; to the opposition in Kashmir the Pact could not have been a meaningless signal. Nehru of course must have been deeply upset. The defence of Kashmir, if not even of India, would become immeasurably more difficult with Pakistan reinforced by American arms; the demilitarization envisaged in the plebiscite plan, already delayed so long by Pakistan on its side, was now impossible for India too.

But it was left to the Soviet Union to give the greatest elaboration to such connection as there might conceivably be between Washington's policy on Kashmir and its global strategy. When Bulganin and Khrushchev reported to the Soviet Communist Party on their tour of India Bulganin said, in December, 1955: "As for the Kashmir problem it has been created by states which pursue military and political objectives in that area. On the pretext of supporting Pakistan in the Kashmir question, certain countries tried to entrench themselves in that part of India in order to threaten the areas around Kashmir and to exert pressure on them. Attempts have been made to sever Kashmir artificially from India and to turn it into a foreign military base.... The Kashmir Question has already been settled by the people of Kashmir themselves. They consider themselves an integral part of the Republic of India. We became profoundly convinced of this during our talks in Srinagar."

But when all that is said the question remains whether, even if the Pact had not intervened, India would have agreed to face

the hazards of a plebiscite. In the first four years after the accession she was probably willing; Sheikh Abdullah was a popular hero then and his allegiance to India had been often reaffirmed. But the two fatal flaws in him, his arbitrariness and notions of grandeur, had earned him much hatred. His successor was popular for a time but in most of his defects outdid the Sheikh and came down the same way. In these circumstances would any one in Nehru's place have agreed to a plebiscite any more than Nehru, and expose the whole country to the shake-up which would have followed? Or would he too have found ways of delays and evasion as Nehru did—and before him Pakistan did during the ascendancy of Abdullah? I think such distinterested attachment to the principle of self-determination would be hard to find either in India or any other country.

A small post-script to this tale of topsy-turvydom. In the second half of the 'fifties India and the USSR objected to the supply of American military arms to Pakistan; in the early sixties the arms came to India and the objections from Pakistan and China. At the end of 1959 Pakistan declared it would not accept any agreement about Ladakh between India and China. At the end of 1962 it was Pakistan and China who announced the agreement and India who objected. But this of course is only a small topsy within the very big turvy of a world in which China accuses Russia and the United States of ganging up against her.

## II

As the circle of non-alignment spread, India's diplomatic contact with a number of somewhat like-minded countries became deeper and broader. Nothing of very permanent or material benefit came out of this association. Economic links and concerted action in trade were not even talked about, let alone evolved. Nor was its effective spread as great as in their enthusiasm the votaries of non-alignment claimed: Arab countries were more united by their hatred of Israel than by the practice of non-alignment; the Africans, as a group somewhat recent members of the club, were more boisterous than steady in their adherence to non-alignment or indeed to any other set of beliefs; some of the most important countries of Asia are

members of alliances and pacts.

The balance-sheet does not improve if the club is re-named Afro-Asia: at once it loses one of its most mature and useful members, President Tito, and even such binding as the purposes of non-alignment provide; the geographical description becomes clearer but very little else. Non-alignment at least attracted suitors to its door in the days when the Soviet-American search for friends was more vigorous; Afro-Asians as such had not even this to commend them except in so far as they were also non-aligned. The Afro-Asians played a part at the United Nations. But again, really those among them did so who had some room to manoeuvre because they were not committed to alliances. And it was far more in their case than in the rest of the Afro-Asians'—far more in the case of Egypt, Yugoslavia, India and in the early years Indonesia, than in that of Thailand, South Vietnam, Iraq and in the early years Pakistan—that nationalism became a strong force and not only gave them strength within their frontiers but also significance outside.

But the badge of the club added to an Indian's self-esteem as he saw the growing spread of a doctrine he could rightly describe as his own Prime Minister's; or as he saw the great leaders of many countries express feelings of comradeship with Nehru if they were also club members; or, if they were not, hear them wish it aloud that he would be on their side. The sense of belonging this gave to new nations which would otherwise have felt more acutely insecure is not to be underestimated. The interest of most Indians in matters of foreign policy was nourished by these spectacles. Thus they became more aware of the outside world than they might have been otherwise. Their interest followed the spreading circle of non-alignment. First it encompassed South-East Asia and the Far East. Then, with Nasser, it was drawn to the Arabs and with Tito to a part of Europe which neither colonialism nor Communist propaganda had made familiar to Asians. The first African leader to visit India—President Nkrumah of Ghana—did not come till the beginning of 1959, and correspondingly Indian interest in Africa was late in awakening. But when he came, so much was made of him as the symbol of African resurgence that some of the lost time was made up.

Tito's companionship in ideas proved especially beneficial to Nehru, and through him to Indian opinion in general; it became a new kind of window on Europe and a bridgehead for non-alignment there. Nehru acknowledged this debt handsomely when he said in Parliament in 1956 that "Yugoslavia has become a country with which India exchanges appraisals of the world situation, especially of the European situation, more frequently almost than with any other country". India had a particular reason to be thankful to Yugoslavia: when Yugoslavia's Bebler was chairman of the UN Security Council in November 1950, he proposed privately that the whole question of a plebiscite in Kashmir should be postponed for five or ten years; in spite of the USA canvassing support for Pakistan, Bebler continued to speak up for India. But the wider value of the Yugoslav association was greater. Already a bridge between Communist and non-Communist halves of Europe, it gave perspective to Asian and African and more especially Indian thinking about European problems. Tito also brought a dynamism to non-alignment—in all his tours through Asia and Africa he scoffed at passive co-existence—which was nevertheless tempered by his maturer experience of affairs. It is not surprising that the three ablest statesmen of non-alignment, Nehru, Nasser and Tito, became its inner cabinet after their first joint meeting at Brioni in July 1956.

A few positive things can be said about the summit meeting at Brioni which cannot be said about most conferences of the non-aligned or the Afro-Asians. The communiques of the latter were generally without a recognizable purpose or direction; any hatful of them could be summed up as peace upon most men and plague upon some. But the Brioni communique was among the exceptions. It spoke only about a few key issues and about them more clearly. Instead of formulating unobservable codes of international conduct it urged more specifically the admission of China to the United Nations, the ending of French rule in Algeria, and the unification of all divided countries, especially Germany, through their wishes being freely determined by peaceful means.

The Brioni conference brought the three men together at an interesting stage in their affairs, when the two things in international affairs which affected them most, their relations with

the Big Powers and of the Big Powers with each other, were undergoing a shift. Nasser was already the bad Arab to the West: he was to become even worse a week later when he nationalized the Suez Canal. On the other hand his relations with the Russians were improving. Khrushchev had picked up the Aswan High Dam after the Americans had abruptly dropped it (another sign of the clumsiness of American diplomacy towards Afro-Asian countries and the smartness of the Russian through much of the 'fifties). Nehru's own blood pressure was only just recovering from a similar spectacle: in the preceding year, while the Russians were earning plaudits for describing Kashmir as part of India and for supporting the Indian stand on Goa, Dulles was doing the reverse by describing Goa as a Portuguese province. But the more immediately relevant factors for him were that he had just concluded a very successful tour of the Soviet Union, and he had begun to see the shape of the coming trouble with China, of which he was to give a public hint in the following year. The days of Tito's serious trouble with the Russians (which had ended in the preceding summer) were not so far behind him that he should have forgotten the sympathy and support he received from the Western powers and to which he made a public reference during a visit to India. But now his relations with the Soviet Union were much better, while his clash with China was only two summers ahead. For all three of them this was a time of critical reassessment; they were suitably situated for deriving the maximum benefit from the opportunity for multi-lateral consultations which, when seriously used, was one of the few good things about being a member of the non-aligned or the Afro-Asian club.

Certain trends in the years after Brioni suggest that the maturer counsels of Nehru, Nasser and Tito were beginning to play in closer concert in the club. In the first place these three leaders at any rate began to give some attention to economic affairs; their meeting in Cairo in November 1961, probably the last meeting of the inner cabinet, was taken up almost wholly with the need and methods of economic cooperation. Secondly, they started widening the horizon of discussion at meetings of the non-aligned, leading them away from denunciatory rhetoric to more constructive diplomacy. They began to shift the club's



attention, especially of the more impetuous Afro-Asians, towards the larger and more urgent task of preventing the cold war from becoming hot, even if it meant dampening their anti-colonial fires a little bit.

With Soekarno and Nkrumah, though the guiding hand was probably the trio's, they made a strong bid in October, 1960, to get the UN General Assembly to direct Eisenhower and Khrushchev to sit down and talk instead of threatening the peace of the world. In spite of the active opposition of the United States and Britain and somewhat passive one of the Communist bloc, they mustered a majority vote behind the bid which was defeated only when it ran into a procedural wrangle. At the Belgrade conference of the non-aligned in September 1961, Tito, Nasser and Nehru were again the three wise men; their counsel again was that the first task was to prevent a war breaking out, not to step up the tempo of Soekarno's denunciatory dances, which were proving very popular. Nehru warned the conference against outdated slogans and urged it to realise that "the era of classical colonialism is over". Far from making his criticism one-sided and propagandist, Nasser showed more boldness than the rest and unambiguously criticised the Soviet Union for resuming nuclear tests. Tito's voice was the clearest: "The purpose of this meeting is to demonstrate to the protagonists of force that the majority of the world decisively rejects the use of force as a means of settling the various important problems we have inherited from the last war. . . . It would be erroneous if we were to attack certain countries as such for purely propaganda motives instead of voicing our resolute disagreement with the methods applied by some great powers towards other countries." The final communique which the conference issued, "The Declaration of the Belgrade Conference", showed this point of view to be in a minority; the Declaration was more worthy of Bandung at its declamatory best. But, largely at Nehru's insistence, the conference issued a separate appeal to the Big Two, more in line with Nehru's, Nasser's and Tito's speeches.

Would subsequent conferences have come round to the trio's way of thinking, consolidating the power the non-aligned had already shown at the United Nations and using it still more responsibly on behalf of a stabler peace? The answer is

caught up in "Ifs" — what would have happened if India's defeat (and what is even more important, her sense of defeat) at the hands of China had not made her a back-bencher at such gatherings? Nehru's and Nasser's and Tito's language might have prevailed over the language of Soekarno. But the chance diminished with the diminution of Nehru. India's counsels of moderation were going to be regarded in future not as signs of wisdom but of fear of China and dependence upon the West. The Belgrade-New Delhi-Cairo triangle was going to be reduced to an axis, meaning that for India a chapter had ended.

### III

India's relations with China were much more complicated than with the rest of the Afro-Asians; in sunshine or rain they had an intensity about them, sudden gradients of affection and anger. At the very start of the 'fifties, a dark shadow fell upon them. In November, 1950, some Members of Parliament complained that Chinese maps showed the boundaries of China on the banks of the Brahmaputra, to which Nehru replied, with characteristic irascibility: — "Map or no map the McMahon Line is our frontier and no one will be allowed to cross it." The context of that remark was already explosive; a dispute had erupted between India and China about the status of Tibet. China had invaded Tibet, warned India that "no foreign interference will be tolerated", told her to keep out of "an entirely domestic problem of China", and accused her of "blocking a settlement"; India was reduced to expressing "amazement" at the tone and content of Chinese notes.

But at this very time, in the winter of 1950-51, India made a considerable sacrifice, probably the greatest she has made in the interests of good relations with China. During a session of the UN General Assembly in that winter the USA sounded India whether she would take a permanent seat in the Security Council, which obviously would have meant that China would be out of it. But when Nehru's opinion was asked he wrote back to his representative at the United Nations: "We must stand by the People's Government of China coming into the Security Council . . . India, because of many factors, is certainly entitled to a permanent seat in the Security Council. But we

are not going in at the cost of China."

The roots of this attitude, more in Nehru's mind than of Indians generally, go back to a great deal earlier than India's independence, back to the days of China's struggle against Western dominance and the Sino-Japanese war. In return Chiang Kai-shek became a conspicuous advocate of independence for India. But after independence Nehru made good relations with China an important part of his world view. In the course of the early 'fifties he repeated this often. "There can be little doubt that the Chinese government is trying its best to be friendly to us. I am sure that it is of great importance to Asia and to the world that India and China should be friendly. How far we shall succeed I cannot say. (But) I have a strong feeling that the future of Asia is rather tied up with the relations between India and China."

Nehru worked consistently to make the effort succeed. He had none of the hardware of goodwill diplomacy to work with: economic relations between the two countries were never more than rudimentary; there was little exchange of finances, goods or skills. During Nehru's tour of China in 1954, the reception was tumultuous—he was greeted by one million people in Peking on October 19—but of promises of economic bonds which usually mark such occasions there was not much evidence. A civil aviation agreement was signed but it did not lead to a great deal in the years which followed. The same day a trade protocol was signed in New Delhi but it provided only for an exchange of goods worth \$ 1,240,000. Of the many delegations which went to China only one, an agricultural study team, had a clear economic bias and even that came back more loaded with admiration for China's achievements than with any suggestions practicable in Indian conditions.

In third party relationships also China was of no great help to India; the reverse is far more true. With no country, not even the Soviet Union, did India's relations become better—they became worse with many—on account of her good relations with China. But India, second non-Communist country to recognize the People's Government, worked tirelessly to improve China's image before the United Nations and the Afro-Asians by proclaiming China's adherence, jointly with India, to the five principles of peaceful co-existence, the Panchsheel, enun-

ciated by the two countries in 1954, of which the essence was mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, relations based upon equality and non-aggression, and a pledge not to interfere in each other's internal affairs. India's efforts to introduce China to the UN and other assemblies continued year after year, with an ardour matched only by the Soviet Union and exceeded by none.

But they touched their highest pitch at Bandung in April 1955, the biggest gathering of the Afro-Asian countries since the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in 1947. Or rather bigger: there were more Africans at Bandung than at New Delhi, and the fanfare was far louder. It was enough to drown the nagging voice of doubt which in the previous year had been heard in the Western countries, and to some extent also in India, whether all was really lovely in the Sino-Indian garden. During Nehru's visit to Peking in 1954, his attention was drawn at a press conference to reports in the British and American press, reflected a little in the Indian press also, that differences had arisen between him and some of the Chinese leaders. Nehru permitted himself only to say that "India's basic approach is somewhat different from China's in regard to some matters". But at Bandung Nehru and Chou En-lai were so close together, metaphorically speaking, that you could not slip a piece of paper between them.

More than a little drama was added to the occasion by the crash of the Air India *Super-Constellation*, *Kashmir Princess*, which was scheduled at one stage to bring the Chinese Prime Minister to Bandung but on account of a last-minute switch was carrying some junior members of the Chinese delegation. Reports at the time as well as investigation later showed that the crash was caused by a time-bomb placed in the aircraft during a halt in Hong Kong. The Chinese extracted the last ounce out of the enormous anti-Western propaganda value of the crash; they were able to prove that they had given the British advance warning of a plot. The result of the explosion was to make Bandung's welcoming embrace for Chou even warmer when he arrived by another Air India plane, following a route and a schedule which were kept secret until he landed in Rangoon. It also gave added point to Chou En-lai's sorrowful reference to "the enemies of Bandung".

Chou made his entry with just enough hesitation, as becomes a debutante, while Nehru busied himself as the chaperon. On the second or third day, when the Political Committee sought to appoint Thailand's Prince Wan as the rappporteur, Chou stalled the proceedings by asking what was a rappporteur. He could not give his consent until he knew. Nehru had to take him aside and explain to him what a rappporteur was. As concerted criticism of Communism developed, especially of Soviet control over Eastern Europe, Chou kept his counsel while the conference stood split between the "co-existence group", which included India, Indonesia, Burma, China and Egypt, and the "collective security group" which included Thailand, the Philippines, Pakistan, Turkey and Ceylon. It fell to Nehru then to conduct the defence of both the Soviet Union and China. Thus everyone was impressed by Chou's polite imperturbability.

India and Ceylon were at this stage quietly competing—Nehru a great deal more quietly than Sir John Kotelewala—to float Sino-American negotiations to settle the dispute over Formosa. But the mists of the cold war were by now thickening over Bandung and initiatives of this sort were not getting anywhere. After a few efforts had failed, Nehru invited Chou to a small lunch with General Romulo of the Philippines and Prince Wan Wathiakon—"to introduce Chou to polite society" as the Prince put it—and a couple of days later promoted a similar lunch by the Indonesian Prime Minister. At the end of this meeting Chou made an unexpected announcement of China's willingness to negotiate a Formosa settlement with the USA. A grateful assembly of Afro-Asians, who had begun to fear that their much-heralded conference would end up with nothing to show for itself, heaved a sigh of relief. Then the United States made its own gift to Chou. It made a prompt statement on Chou's offer which everyone at Bandung took to be a curt rejection. This gave the finishing touches to the picture which Chou, ably helped by Nehru, had been painting of himself: a reasonable and moderate person, much sinned against by Western imperialists. It is not at all surprising that by the time the conference ended it had become a personal triumph for Chou, the deb, while the chaperon receded into the background.

In the summer following Bandung Menon went to Peking, at

Mao's invitation, and then round the world to discuss Formosa in London, Washington and Ottawa. Nothing came of the effort, probably the last to settle this dangerous issue, but it added to the volume of opinion which under Adlai Stevenson's leadership was growing up already in the USA on behalf of a settlement. Bilateral exchanges between India and China continued to ooze the Panchsheel spirit.

But Nehru's thirty-year old attachment to China was to turn sour very soon. When exactly Nehru began to apprehend danger is not very clear. Soon after the attack in 1962, it became privately known to many that a committee of Indian military and civilian officials was set up as early as 1951 or 1952 to study possible defence roads along the border, an area in which communications had been neglected for generations. But some members of the committee insist to this day that Nehru scoffed at road alignments which were suggested with the danger from the north in mind; only those roads were approved which aimed at a generally opening up these remote areas to the rest of India.

But even if one were to go by public record, Nehru was concerned about this border from about 1954, the year in which the five principles were enunciated, and worried about it from the end of 1958. A Government White Paper showed in 1959 that Nehru took up the question of border demarcation in 1954, pointing out to Chou En-lai that some Chinese maps had shown a wrong border delineation. Chou's reply, according to Nehru, was only that these were old maps which the Communist government had not had time to revise. Nehru took up the question again in 1956, and according to an aide memoire Nehru wrote on these talks, Chou accepted the McMahon Line as the frontier between the Indian State of Nefu and the Tibetan region of China. When the wrong delineation reappeared in some new Chinese maps in 1957, India was again told that Peking had not yet had the time to revise the maps.

"I was puzzled by this reply" Nehru records, but not for Chou's reply in January 1959 brought it out into the light that behind the bland reassurances a dispute had been brewing up. "As you are aware", Chou wrote, "the McMahon Line is the product of the British policy of aggression against the region of China... Juridically it cannot be considered

legal." In the meantime the Government of India discovered in 1958 that at the other extreme of the Sino-Indian border, in the Ladakh province of Kashmir, the Chinese in 1957 built a road across the Aksai Chin plateau which Indian maps showed clearly to be part of India. In 1958 India sent reconnaissance parties to this remote and desolate area to investigate; one of them was captured by the Chinese. In reply to India's protests the Chinese came up with a claim in this area also: the road they declared ran through Chinese territory only, which meant that they had laid a claim on the plateau.

Thereafter events were to move very rapidly. China declared that it "absolutely does not recognise the so-called McMahon Line", does not accept "India's unilateral claim" on the disputed territory in Ladakh, holds India responsible for "trespassing and provocation" across the Tibetan frontier, and would hold India "fully responsible" for the consequences. On the one hand the war of speeches, letters and notes of protest continued, accompanied on the Chinese side by the publication of successive maps which showed more and more of Indian territory as part of China—a Chinese map made public by the Government of India in the autumn of 1959 showed a Chinese claim on about 40,000 square miles of Indian territory by this cartographic aggression. On the other hand with increasing clarity the threat assumed a military character. "Minor incidents" Nehru said in August 1959 had occurred over the preceding two or three years, but on August 25 a Chinese force more than 200 strong intruded into India at Longju, in Nefa and occupied an Indian post. In October Chinese troops entered 40 miles into Indian territory in Ladakh and killed nine members of an Indian patrol party; ten Indians were captured. Uneasiness spread among kingdoms along India's northern border which have a special relationship with India, and Nehru held out firm assurance of protection for them although it was not at all clear to many thinking Indians at that time whether India was in a position to meet these commitments.

Two months later, following a visit to Bhutan and Nepal, Nehru firmed up the commitment still further. "May I repeat what we have already declared—any aggression against Bhutan and Nepal will be considered by us as aggression on India. I know very well what this involves. It is a very grave respon-

sibility, but realising this and thinking it out, we said so long ago. Now I want to repeat it, not for wider considerations but also because of considerations of India's security." The situation was to unfold itself most adversely later. But two consequences were immediately apparent. One, that as rapidly as it had mounted ten years earlier, affection for China turned to revulsion throughout India. And two, there was some scepticism among India's northern neighbours already about India's ability to protect them, and they began a process of diplomatic disengagement from India's special responsibility towards them. In some territories the move was almost surreptitious; in some more open; the Government of Nepal declared that it had no border dispute with China and apprehended no danger from it.

#### IV

A broad and somewhat simplified graph, drawn in the perspective of the last two decades would show that India's relations with the smaller countries, her interest in and concern for the overlapping Afro-Asian and non-aligned families, took an opposite direction from that of her relations with the bigger powers, especially with the Big Two. Nehru's imagination and emotions, as well as self-interest, were engaged by the countries which like India had just gained independence and were striving to protect it against the tensions of the cold war. Their nationalism and India's reinforced each other and became a strong influence upon Nehru's foreign policy until China turned its pressure upon India. He saw in this nationalism the springs of their independence as well as the best means of preserving it; and whoever saw the same things in it and as much, had Nehru on his side in international debate.

But from about 1959 Nehru began to disengage himself from their chorus for various reasons. He was repelled by the undisciplined enthusiasm of some of the newer countries especially those whom Soekarno flamboyantly described as "the newly emerging forces". Secondly, he felt, as at *Belgrade*, that it was more important to help bridge the gap between the Big Two than to turn non-aligned conferences into recruiting grounds for one side or the other. Thirdly, he decided that discretion was the better part of nationalism: not only should he mute



his criticism of the West, upon whom he would have to depend for help, but he should either prevent non-alignment from becoming a kind of anti-Western game, which in any case the Chinese could play better than India, or else he should withdraw from the game as discreetly as he could. In the end the last is what happened most.

Quite contrary was the movement of India's relations with the Big Two. They began in a low key and improved with time. Ardour at the start was inhibited by specific as well as general causes. The Communist attitude to India soon after her independence is reflected in the quotation from Stalin given at the start of this book: India was ready to be broken up from within, and its disintegration, not survival, was what most interested the Communists. Those were the days when Nehru used to be described in Soviet polemics as the running dog of imperialism. But this did not last longer than the first five years or so of Indian independence: by that time it became obvious in the first place that India was not a ripe plum ready to fall into the Communist lap, and in the second place that Indian policies, far from assisting Western imperialism in any shape or form were probably a very sound prophylactic against it. Proceeding from different sources and causes Indian foreign policy often produced the same effect upon certain problems as Soviet policies.

Then followed, in rapid succession, clear and open Soviet support for India on Kashmir and Goa, support for India's resentment against American military aid for Pakistan, encouragement for India's socialistic pattern of economy and for several major projects in the public sector (which the Americans felt a little self-conscious in supporting), arms aid and the MIG production projects which not only survived the Chinese attack upon India but in the light of that attack assumed much greater significance; their meaning was to become more reassuring for India as the Sino-Soviet rift widened.

In comparison, Indo-US relations have developed more haltingly and slowly, with more and sharper ups and downs. But their net movement was distinctly forward. Until the eve of Indian independence, the United States was very popular in India because of its support for the independence movement: despite the attraction Communism has for many, the Soviet

Union was less popular because of the view it held of India. In his first statement on foreign policy as Vice-Chairman of the Interim Government, Nehru rated friendship with the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, the United States, and the Soviet Union in that order. Certain things he found distasteful when he toured the United States in 1949; it is possible they confirmed the impression he had formed of American economic imperialism when he was a student in Europe. But nothing had yet happened which would give the United States a lower priority in his thinking than the Soviet Union; in fact he was more openly critical of many things Russian, especially the methods of Communism, and with the Soviet Union he had a real clash of national interests while with the United States he had none. But a clash with the U.S.A. was not long in coming, and when it came it was bitter: as his letters to the Indian representative on the Security Council show, India believed as early as 1950 that the United States was putting pressure upon India with regard to Kashmir.

The pressure would have been less offensive to India if the USA had also recognized, which all Indians do whether or not they believe that a plebiscite should have been held, that Kashmir had legally acceded to India and Pakistan's attack upon it, admitted by Pakistan, was aggression. Since the USA did not take this view even at a time when it had no pact obligations towards Pakistan, Indian opinion could think of only two reasons for American pressure; each aggravated Indian feelings. One was that this was retaliation against the stand India had taken with regard to Korea,<sup>1</sup> the other that an opening was being sought in a strategic area of Central Asia, as part of what the UN Secretary-General, in connection with Korea, had already described as "the world-wide antagonism between the Soviet Union and the United States".

From that time onwards India's relations with the USA never quite escaped the net of India's embroilment with Pakistan; where Kashmir left off military pacts took up. On some of his visits to New Delhi Dulles gave assurances which, if the climate had been more helpful, might have alleviated the suspicions a little. Apart from assurances given in private somewhat earlier,

<sup>1</sup> See p. 90.

he said in public in March 1956 that the United States had not taken any position on Kashmir "other than that it wanted to see a peaceful settlement". On arms aid to Pakistan he was still more categorical. "There can be every confidence on the part of India that there will be no use of these armaments in any aggressive way against India. Pakistan knows that if that should happen, there will be a quick ending of its good relations with the United States, and that under the United Nations Charter the USA would support India if she became a victim of any armed aggression." But apart from the assurance proving less than a piece of paper in 1965 when these arms were so used, the climate in 1956 was far from being helpful.

Indian thinking had barely got adjusted to US views on Kashmir when Dulles gave implicit support to Portugal over Goa, or at least everyone in India took him to have given this support when he described Goa as one of Portugal Far Eastern Provinces.

However, apart from particular disagreements about Goa and Kashmir and military aid to Pakistan — or Korea and Vietnam and the crises over the Suez canal and Hungary, three illustrations of India's conduct of foreign policy which are discussed a little later<sup>1</sup>—a much wider and basic divergence was growing up between Nehru and Dulles about their respective interpretations of the world situations and what needed to be done about it.

Upon the minds of those whom he met in New Delhi, Dulles left the impression that he was an earnest, sincere and very dedicated person who had come to a wrong judgment about the Asian situation and its requirements because he had viewed it in European terms only. He had only to acquire the feel of Asia, it was thought, and the divergence between his and Nehru's viewpoints would narrow. And twice, after his tour of southern Asia, Dulles said things which supported this hope. In the summer of 1953 he said the United States should discard the appearance of giving any support to "colonialism" in the Middle East and Asia, and he regretted that US policy had become "unnecessarily ambiguous" in allaying the suspicion that America was trying to preserve or restore the old colonial

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 265-70.

interests of France and Britain. He corroborated that "most of the peoples of Middle East and Southern Asia were deeply suspicious" of the colonial powers, a suspicion which he said also extended to the USA because of her association with Britain and France in Nato. After this particular tour through the Middle East he even appeared to have acquired a healthy scepticism about what others had believed to be his panacea for everything, a collective security pact. He said he had found only "a vague desire" for such a pact in the Middle East, which he added could not be "imposed" upon the area by the Western Powers.

After another tour of Asia, in the spring of 1956, he said: "We need to be aware of how proud the peoples of Asia are to be free of foreign domination, and how sensitive they are to any hint of encroachments from without. Also, let us remember that while we think first of the danger that stems from international communism, many of them think first of possible encroachments from the West, for that is the rule they have actually known at first-hand .... But none of the leaders is blind to the dangers of Communism."

These were not very different from the public statements of Nehru. But so marked was the contrast of the actions which accompanied them that frustrated hope added poison to the discord, as it always does. After the statement about colonialism came the support for Portugal about Goa, and after the one about "encroachments from the West" came the Baghdad Pact. The Seato pact followed so soon after the desire was expressed to cleanse the United States of the taint of association with former colonialisms in the area that it led people to suspect that the purpose of the expression was only to undermine the position of Britain and France and strengthen America's. But whatever the compulsions upon his policy or the contradictions between what he said and did, the distance between Washington and New Delhi became greater.

When the British Foreign Secretary invited the five "Colombo Plan" countries—the first international organization for economic cooperation in southern Asia—India, Burma and Indonesia offered such flat opposition that Ceylon, which appeared otherwise inclined, decided not to go to the Manila conference where Seato was born. Pakistan agreed to go, and later decided to

join; but that, in later years, contributed more complications than stability in this area. Nehru insisted that Seato "was likely to change the whole trend towards peace that the Geneva conference (on Indo-China) has created by its decisions". After the Baghdad Pact he said more sweepingly: "It is our firm conviction that these two treaties and similar military pacts do not add to the intrinsic strength of regions in the interests of which they are supposed to have been devised."

The Seato Council insisted, after it had been in existence for two years, that "Communist tactics were placing increasing reliance upon methods of economic and political infiltration.... The Council attributed this shift to collective security arrangements". But it had always been Nehru's contention—not borne out by the events of 1962 though again confirmed thereafter—that the greater threat of Communism was precisely this infiltration, against which he believed military pacts with a foreign power to be worse than ineffective; by weakening the sense of national identification and mixing it up with imported symbols of power they only made the soil more fertile for infiltration and subversion. It was almost a decade later that this thought became an ingredient in American policies as well.

But in the meantime some relief in the pressure of discords in Indo-US relations came from quite unexpected quarters. The Anglo-French misadventure over the Suez, and the overlapping brutal event of the Russian intervention in Hungary in the fall of 1956 contributed, each in its own way, to a better understanding of each other by India and the USA. On the Suez issue India and the United States found each other on the same side in many UN votes, with Britain and France on the opposite side; this was the kind of American dissociation from the former colonial powers which many Asian countries would have liked to see much earlier. On the other hand the suppression of the rebellion in Hungary caused bitter disillusionment with Soviet professions among many people in India; Nehru himself, after initial hesitations the reasons for which are examined later,<sup>1</sup> said harsher things about the Soviet Union on this than on any other issue.

Against this background when Nehru went again to the USA,

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 269-70.

at the end of 1956, he said some of the most complimentary things about Americans that an Indian statesman has ever said; certainly the contrast with his own comments during earlier visits to the USA was obvious and instructive. He found in the USA more "understanding and appreciation" of non-alignment than in the past, and sufficient sympathy for Egypt for him to say: "During this period of anxiety and distress the USA has added greatly to its prestige by upholding worthily the principles of the Charter of the United Nations." About Indo-US relations in particular he said: "No Indian can forget that in the days of our struggle for freedom we received from (the USA) a full measure of sympathy and support. Our two Republics share a common faith in democratic institutions and the democratic way of life and are dedicated to the cause of peace and freedom. We wish to learn from you and we plead for your friendship, cooperation and sympathy in the great task that we have undertaken in our own country." Similar views during his first visit, in 1949, might have nipped many subsequent misunderstandings in the bud. Even at this stage, however, they laid a foundation, and not a year too soon, upon which more could be built in the course of time. Strains did not disappear from Indo-US relations, not a bit; since then as much as before, they have erupted into hot disagreement at the slightest provocation. But at least there was some cordiality to record alongside the discord, and in times unclouded by anger it was possible for the two countries to see that their real interests ran parallel to each other, not across.

At the end of 1959 Eisenhower visited Pakistan, the first American head of state to do so. But the reaction in India was far from adverse: on the other hand it was noted with some relief that in the joint statement he issued with Ayub at the end of this visit, the only reference to Kashmir, a heavily veiled one at that, was such that no one in India could possibly take exception to it. His arrival in New Delhi on December 9 was a memorable occasion for him and New Delhi: he was given the biggest reception India had seen. At the end of his visit he described it as "one of the moving experiences of my life" and he added he was leaving India "with the warmest and friendliest feelings for this great country". Friendliness oozed from everything he and Nehru said to each other or jointly to

the world.

For his successor, President Kennedy, Indians had conspicuously friendly and affectionate feelings: his death caused a genuine and widespread sense of loss. Self-interest played, as it should, an even stronger part than affection. With the volume of economic aid expanding the way it was, and the Chinese stepping up their attacks, it was inevitable that Indo-US relations should become as close as they did in the decade of the sixties. More surprising was the persistence of irritants.

Like the United States, the Soviet Union too had supported India's demand for independence in the course of the forties. But Moscow too was not able to milk much credit out of it, and during the first five years of India's independence there was a deep chill in Indo-Soviet relations. But here the analogy ends and differences of deeper significance begin. The chill mostly affected those who understood the nature of international Communism in those days, who could place the Communist rebellion in Telengana in the context of Stalin's predictions about the disintegration of India. There was no popular indignation against the Soviet Union as there was against the United States at that time and on several occasions later. The reason for the difference is not that if you scratch an Indian you will find a Communist underneath, as many Americans used to be only too ready to believe at one time, or that—though there is some truth in this—the Indian leadership shielded Soviet sins from Indian eyes. The reasons are quite different; some the United States could not have helped, because they were rooted in history; some it could have helped but did not.

As even Dulles perceived though only for a time, colonialism is a greater sin in Indian eyes than Communism, and the Soviet Union had the image of being anti-colonial. What it had done in Eastern Europe was not such an emotional reality in Indian eyes as what the colonial powers had done in India and the neighbourhood. The Soviet Union could be counted against these powers; the United States could not be. The Soviet Union identified itself with India's national positions on Kashmir and Goa while the USA did not; this is what Washington could have helped but did not. The Soviet Union reaped an enormous harvest of Indian goodwill from this, much bigger than it could have only from support for India's socialistic pretensions and

the general similarity between its approach and India's to many international problems.

Because of these factors, whose emotional potential is too obvious to be stressed, relations between the Soviet Union and India escalated rapidly from the chill of the early fifties to the extraordinary warmth that has marked them for the past ten years. This did not prevent Nehru from delivering gentle reproof when the occasion called for it. In the summer of 1955, when the Soviet Union accorded him the uncommon honour of arranging a rally attended by 100,000 people for him to address—the only non-Communist visitor to be given this opportunity till that time—he said by innuendo what could not have been lost upon the Russians: "We did not understand some of the developments in your country, just as you might not have understood much that we did"—thus disposing off some of the epithets used about him once in Communist polemics—"...by learning cannot be fruitful if it is imposed from outside" and therefore there must be "no interference with each other and no attempt at domination." Though late by a few days, his condemnation of Russian intervention in Hungary, when it came, was unambiguous.<sup>1</sup> In his address to the UN General Assembly in 1960 he was strongly critical of Khrushchev's diatribes against the way the United Nations had worked. When the Soviet Union resumed nuclear tests, Nehru declared at the Non-aligned Conference at Belgrade "this decision makes the situation much more dangerous. Therefore I regret it deeply, because it may well lead to other countries also starting tests". But on the whole the texture of Indo-Soviet relations has been determined more by the agreements and similarities between the two countries than by disagreements or discordance in their overall approach to international affairs.

## V

Out of these three different relationships, with China, the bigger powers and the non-aligned, Nehru wove some specific decisions. Which thread contributed more depended upon the circumstances of each case, and the dominant thread of course

<sup>1</sup> See p. 268.



always was his own view of India's enlightened self-interest. But the interplay between the three was continuous. He spoke up for Asian and African countries with a voice which attracted some attention in the world; therefore these countries began to cluster around him. But the world paid him heed because he spoke on behalf of a growing group of countries. China heard him as a person who understood the Western powers; the latter because he was for some years their only non-Communist window on China. Between the Big Powers also he was an alternative line of communication. From this resulted, as it was itself the result of, some of his influence with the non-aligned countries. The triangular interplay, while it lasted, was a novel landmark on the world's diplomatic landscape, an Indian contribution designed by Nehru.

Nehru started the chain of interactions when he called the first two conferences which made the post-war Asian countries aware of each other and the world of them; they also extended the appeal of the Asian sentiment to include the Arab Middle East. The conferences themselves could not have been more dissimilar. The first, the Asian Relations Conference held in March 1947, was attended mostly by countries which, like India, had yet to achieve their freedom. The conference was more like the convention of a colourful and somewhat romanticised movement, and the speeches and the setting—a historic expanse in New Delhi overlooked by an ancient fort—were suited to the mood. No decisions were taken and none were expected; only the sapplings of a promising sentiment were planted.

The second, held two years later, was a very business-like affair. The meetings, held in the chamber of the Council of States, India's house of elders in New Delhi, were models of efficiency and dispatch; the decorum could put many a UN General Assembly session to shame. Most of the discussions were in camera but the opening and closing plenary sessions were not, and they were a most impressive Asian debut in international concerts. Nearly all the independent Asian and Arab countries were present. The agenda was specific—the Dutch refusal to quit Indonesia—and so were the recommendations, both to the Security Council and to the participating countries in case the Council could not act. Indonesia would probably have won its independence in any case. But the con-

ference gave a strong push to events and the pride in his voice was justified when Soekarno, inaugurating the Bandung conference in 1955, said the meeting in New Delhi was "a glorious moment in our national history. Never before in the history of mankind had such a solidarity of Asian and African peoples been shown for the rescue of a fellow Asian nation in danger". A third of the UN members were there, representing between them nearly half of humanity. But what is more important a base was made upon which the Asian-Arab and later the Afro-Asian group at the United Nations could stand as an entity which no one could ignore. For Nehru also this became an added source of strength for the initiatives he was to take soon about Korea and then a chain of other issues.

For about five years after the trouble started in Korea, India's attitude was that of a disinterested observer—sympathetic to Korea but helpless and not wishing to get involved. India was aware, because United States Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, had said it, that the Government of South Korea was unsupported by the people; "it would collapse within two or three months without the American's support". As Chairman of the U.N. Commission for Korea, India repeated its demand, despite rebuffs by the North, that it should be given facilities to go in and investigate whether the Soviet Union was evading the U.N. Resolution requiring withdrawal of all foreign troops. But basically, India's view, as summed up by Nehru in the summer of 1950, was that though India did not approve of much that was happening in North and South Korea she did not think it her business "to interfere or intervene in any way. The fate of both these countries was tied up with larger problems and depended upon the solution of these".

When the invasion of South Korea occurred, Nehru did not hesitate to call a spade a spade. In July 1950, he publicly stated that "well planned invasion and aggression" on South Korea by the North had occurred. He also said clearly where he thought the duty of the United Nations lay. "If aggression was allowed to be successful", he said, "the entire structure of the United Nations would have inevitably collapsed and large-scale war resulted. If aggression takes place and the aggressor ignores the United Nations, then only two choices are left: either the United Nations should condemn that aggressor and should try

to put an end to it, or it should come to the conclusion that it has ceased to be an effective instrument for peace and leave the decision of any dispute to war." So long as the United Nations command, largely organized by the United States, confined itself to ending aggression by pushing the northern forces back to the 38th parallel, the United Nations had India's moral (though not military) support. Once this task was over, however, India's concern was much more that the war should be brought to an end than that either side should try out its global purposes at the expense of Korea.

India was one of the few major members of the UN which had diplomatic relations with China, and it succeeded in obtaining an understanding of the Chinese mind on the conditions for a cease-fire in Korea. Some of the conditions stipulated by China involved a settlement of long-term issues to China's satisfaction, but these India side-stepped. Instead, through its influence with Asian and Arab members, India sponsored a 12-nation resolution at the U.N. seeking to set up a committee which would consult China and arrange discussions for a settlement. The resolution was supported by Britain but, on account of the U.S.A.'s opposition, rejected. On the other hand, in spite of initial opposition Britain went along with a US resolution naming China the aggressor, to which Nehru was strongly opposed; he believed this would hinder a settlement and the danger of a major conflagration would persist.

The Soviet Union, of course, was also opposed to condemnation of China. Thus India's position began to diverge from the USA's and to resemble the Soviet Union's. Another step followed when Nehru wrote to both Stalin and Acheson urging the admission of China and the return of the Soviet Union to the United Nations so that Big Power efforts to end the war should be stepped up; to this he received a much warmer response from Stalin than Acheson. India deplored that instead of taking this promising road towards a settlement, the United States was insisting on branding China as aggressor. After the branding resolution had been adopted, Nehru's differences with the USA became still more pronounced. He regretted that "there is still a tendency sometimes to treat the great nations of Asia in the old way. Yet, a major fact of this age is the emergence of this new Asia. This must be recognised if we are to deal

realistically with the world of today". He deplored that the USA and the UN had ignored a warning against a crossing of the 38th parallel which the Indian Ambassador in Peking had transmitted through New Delhi, just as they had ignored an earlier impression he had conveyed that "the People's Government of China is eager to have negotiations for a settlement of the Korean and other problems of the Far East". As a result a chance of bringing about Korea's unity was lost.

India's involvement in Indo-China is a more complicated theme: for one thing, far from being over, the story is still riding towards ends which no one can yet see; second, the USA's own position has shifted a great deal, and it would probably accept today what India once worked for, if only it were available. Its main ingredient, stated by Nehru in April 1954, was that "The conflict in Indo-China is in origins and essential character a movement of resistance to colonialism". He was aware that the Vietminh were Communists and stated so. But to that he attached less importance than to his belief that they were not anybody's stooges. A united Vietnam could, in his view, be an eastern Yugoslavia, Communist but no cat's paw for either Moscow or Peking; to help it remain so he would have wanted the Big Powers to abjure interference in the area. Hence the plan India presented to the Geneva Conference: an immediate cease-fire; termination of French sovereignty; direct negotiations for this between the parties immediately and principally concerned; an agreement between the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and China, supported by a United Nations convention, guaranteeing that there would be no interference by anyone in the internal affairs of Indo-China.

India had reason to be satisfied with herself when in July 1954 the Geneva Conference produced an agreement rather similar to this position; her representative, Krishna Menon, though virtually a gate-crasher at the conference, had played an energetic and constructive part in helping the agreement to evolve. The declaration signed by the eight nations at the conference, including all the Big Five, welcomed the prospect of "full independence and sovereignty" for the Indo-China states, the cessation of hostilities; the prohibition of "the introduction into Vietnam of foreign troops and military personnel, as well as of all kinds of arms and ammunition"; the assurance

that "the settlement of the political problems" for which the declaration had cleared the way, would be "effected on the basis of respect for the principles of independence, unity and territorial integrity", and "shall permit the Vietnamese people to enjoy the fundamental freedoms, guaranteed by democratic institutions, established as a result of free general elections by secret ballot".

Today it appears to be a reasonable guess that most Americans would be willing to support this declaration as the basis for ending the Vietnam war if Hanoi and Peking would do so too. But in the summer of 1954, Washington gave the declaration a grudging welcome while Moscow, Peking, Hanoi and New Delhi (along with London and most parties in Paris) gave it a more whole-hearted one. Whatever the reasons for the first three to be glad, India was because it meant that an independent and united Vietnam, its government formed after free elections, would be able now to take its place among the nations. In the USA on the other hand, Dulles said three days after the declaration: "The important thing from now on is not to mourn the past, but to seize the future opportunity to prevent the loss of North Vietnam from leading to the extension of Communism throughout South-East Asia and the South-West Pacific." India did not consider that North Vietnam had been lost to anyone; it had been only recovered by the people of Vietnam who had been given a guarantee that there would be no interference in their internal affairs. Even less was India in agreement with the next part of what Dulles said: "Arrangements for collective defence need to be made in advance of aggression, not after it is under way. We believe that it will be practical to bring about collective arrangements to promote the security of the free peoples of South-East Asia. Prompt steps will be taken in this direction." This is what led immediately afterwards to Seato, which Nehru greatly deplored (Moscow kept him company) and which became a wedge of growing dimensions between the United States and India.

## CHAPTER 11

# THE SECOND TWILIGHT

### THE CHINESE ATTACK

SINO-INDIAN relations were quiet in 1960 and 1961, compared with what were to follow soon. The exchange of notes continued to be furious, public accusations were worse, the revolt in Lhasa in March 1959 added its own complications, with the Chinese accusing India of complicity. But on the ground there were hardly any clashes. In a last minute summit, Nehru and Chou-En-lai met in April 1960. The two speeches at the airport reception were friendly, on both sides marked by a little sadness but no anger. Chou met almost the whole Indian cabinet by turns but the final communique recorded no agreement, not even progress towards any. All that the summit produced was a little summit; it was decided that teams of officials of the two countries should meet and examine the rival claims. Chou made a very reasonable sounding offer that pending a settlement both sides should keep to "the line of actual control". But as the coming months were to show, this phrase was a trap. The officials held a series of meetings but when the report came out the gulf between the two sides was appalling to see. China had not only laid claim to 50,000 square miles of Indian territory and occupied 12,000 square miles of it by force and stealth. It had also, by very clear implication, declined to recognize Kashmir's accession to India and India's special relationship with Sikkim and Bhutan.

There was the widest disagreement about each other's credentials in the first place. The Indian account of the talks says: "The Indian side furnished a vast and varied amount of material, and fully established that the long traditional boundary of over 2,400 miles shown on current Indian maps was clear and precise, conformed to unchanging natural features, had support in tradition and custom as well as in the exercise of administrative jurisdiction right up to 1959, had been recognised for centuries and had been confirmed in agreements. On the other hand the

Chinese side provided evidence which was scanty, imprecise, of very recent date, and entirely inconsistent in facts and arguments. . . . The Indian side also demonstrated that the boundary shown by them lay along the main watershed in the region and was the natural dividing line between the two countries. In sharp contrast, the Chinese alignment followed no natural features at all. Where alignments coincide it is along the Himalayan watershed line, but when the two alignments differ it is because the Chinese alignment arbitrarily swings westwards and southwards—away from the watershed line and always towards India, never towards Tibet. . . .”

Disagreements over individual sectors were as marked and it became obvious that this method of discussion would not produce an agreement, and many openings for discussions of another kind were lost before and after the fighting began. In March 1962, Nehru urged China to create the conditions for negotiations by vacating the areas it had occupied since 1957, because he said that though India was willing to negotiate she could not do so while the disputed territory continued to be under China's forcible or surreptitious occupation. China rejected this because, it said, this meant vacating territory which it believed to be its own. In May Nehru offered that each side should withdraw from territory claimed by the other, so that the disputed area should become a no-man's land while talks proceeded, and in the meantime China could have continued use of the road it had surreptitiously built across Aksai Chin in Ladakh. But in June India found that China had further extended her encroachment in this area. In July the Chinese surrounded an Indian military post which was ten miles on the Indian side of the border claimed by China. In August China proposed that discussions should start without “pre-conditions” and India replied that “discussions cannot start unless the *status quo* on the boundary in this region (Ladakh) which has been altered by force since 1957 is restored and the current tensions are removed”.

In September Peking came up with the suggestion that the armed forces of both sides should withdraw 20 kilometers along the entire front “in order to ease tension”. But India found this unacceptable because “it leaves the aggressor (the first time India used this word for China) in possession of the fruits of

his aggression". But India offered negotiations "to define measures to restore the *status quo*". Most of this discussion was about the western sector, or Ladakh, but in the autumn it also invaded the eastern sector, in NEFA and the pattern was identical. In September and October a succession of serious border encroachments occurred, the first on September 8. On October 15, India proposed that both sides should return to the positions they held before September 8 and then negotiate. But on October 20 the massive Chinese invasion of NEFA started.

Certain Indian pronouncements of this period were to sound, in the light of subsequent events, very odd indeed. There was such a ring of self-assurance in them about India's ability to defend herself that when the fighting took a drastically different course Nehru confessed "we have been living in a world of make-believe and relied too much upon plans made in map rooms". At the end of 1960, when Members of Parliament, hitherto only angry about the impunity with which the Chinese could violate the frontiers, became anxious about the state of India's defences, Nehru claimed that "at no time since independence have our defence forces been in better condition, in finer fettle, and with a background of greater industrial production in the country to help them than today". Krishna Menon added, "the morale of our forces has never been higher"; incursions were now impossible, he told Parliament in April. Five months before the onslaught, Nehru said the Chinese were getting "nervous and apprehensive at our growing strength". The reason why India was not throwing them out was that "important changes were taking place in China"; her serious food problem verged on a famine. In May he went further: the position on the border is "more advantageous to India and is growing more and more advantageous". But anxiety, and along with that some irresponsible clamour, continued to mount in the country. An MP shouted at the Prime Minister during a debate in the Lok Sabha: "You are surrendering the country to the Chinese." Dark rumours gained currency about Krishna Menon and about the state of the army for which some of his policies were blamed, so that when the Chinese smashed their way into NEFA the demand for his removal became irresistible.

The Chinese attack had the power of an avalanche. They struck at both ends of the border, in areas about 1,000 miles



apart, on October 20, supported by artillery, mortars, mountain guns and, more deadly than their armour, willingness to lose thousands of men in the human wave tactics they had perfected in Korea. Their losses were upwards of five to one but their numbers inexhaustible. Even so in Ladakh at least they were not irresistible. Most of the area they had claimed they captured very quickly, about 14,000 square miles and at points up to fifty miles westwards of the road they had built across Aksai Chin. But beyond that they were held although their attacks on Indian positions, especially Chushul, the highest airfield in the world, were repeated and heavy. But in NEFA they rolled as though nothing could stop them. All Indian forward positions were overrun in the first week's fighting; the Chinese threw in a whole division against one of the main Indian posts at Tawang. A few days' lull lured the retreating Indians forward again, but that only made their casualties higher and the debacle bigger. During the pause the Chinese improved their communications, brought up more fire-power, regrouped, and with three divisions launched a two-pronged offensive which at one end captured Walong, a major Indian position covering the oilfields at Digboi, and at the other covered almost 100 miles in three days, frontally assaulted prepared Indian positions on a strategic pass, outflanked them with another swiftly moving force and trapped the best part of the Indian forces in NEFA. Indian positions were falling so swiftly that the whole of Assam could have been cut off within a few days at the narrow neck lying between East Pakistan and Sikkim which joins the State to eastern India.

But as suddenly as they had started it, the Chinese called off their offensive on November 21, and announced plans for an immediate withdrawal to positions 20 kilometers behind (that is on their own side) of "the line of actual control as it existed between India and China on November 7, 1959". (This is a phrase they had used in one of their earlier notes also, proposing that both sides withdraw 20 kilometers behind this line. Since India was prepared to negotiate if both sides withdrew to the positions held on September 7, 1962, the Chinese offer appeared to be a generous one. But when the notes were examined further it turned out that according to the Chinese interpretation the line they "controlled" in November 1959, was no different from their extreme line of claims. The implication was

that they would retain most of their new gains well west of the Aksai Chin road in Ladakh, which they have done, while in NEFA they would withdraw behind the McMahon Line—with a few exceptions—because they were willing to recognize it though they considered it illegal.)

Why did they announce the cease-fire and withdrawal? This question is tied up with why they attacked in the first place, and that in turn is wrapped up in mystery; the outcome of the fighting is strikingly clear but its causes and course are still, very largely, a riddle. However, some speculative answers can be tried out, in the light of such facts, preceding and following the fighting, which are undisputed or about which some of those directly concerned with the fighting have lately written.

Neither speculation nor facts leave any room for doubting that some of the responsibility is clearly India's. The opposition clamour which confronted Nehru is well known, and equally well known is his habit of yielding to clamour when he could not divert it. Left to his own judgment he might have decided to swallow Chinese provocations on the border. But when he was faced with an intensely vocal demand for some action, he gave in. Lt-General Kaul, who was Corps commander in NEFA at the time of the fighting, has since written at some length on this aspect in *The Untold Story*.<sup>1</sup> The book is riddled with evidence which shows him to be an unworthy soldier and an undependable witness. But the state of public opinion in 1962 and Nehru's reactions to it confirm his own estimate that "Nehru was aware of the mounting criticism of the people but also knew the handicaps from which our armed forces were suffering. He was, therefore, anxious to devise some via media and take action, short of war, in order to appease the people. . . . I think Nehru framed this policy (of extending Indian posts into forward areas) principally for the benefit of Parliament and the public, and also perhaps as a 'strategy' of beating the Chinese at their own game. He hit upon it during a period when the India-China relationship was deteriorating fast. He saw in it one reply to his critics. He landed in this situation due to constant and unrealistic criticism from the Opposition benches in Parliament against the way he was handling the border situa-

<sup>1</sup> Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1967.

tion. (Events then developed in such a way that they escalated into a clash between the Chinese and us in 1962 which came to everyone in India as a major surprise)."

From this and other evidence it is substantially clear that India also contributed to the hotting up of the dispute through the serious mistake Nehru made of yielding to public opinion instead of educating it, and through the still more serious mistake by Nehru and Menon of miscalculating India's strength and China's intentions. But this does not explain why a situation arose, and two or three years before the clamour in Parliament, which increasingly came in the way of a negotiated settlement of what was, in the beginning, a very minor territorial dispute. India made several attempts to raise a discussion which would lead to a negotiated settlement, but she was rebuffed. As recounted in these pages a little later, the Chinese rejected one proposal after another of reaching an agreement through the customary methods. At the same time, as General Kaul also acknowledges on pp. 324-25 of his book, they stepped up those military provocations which were to inflame public opinion in India later on and compel Nehru to choose between unequal military combat or the blot of cowardice; either choice would mean his own and India's humiliation, and this seemed a strange objective for the Chinese to prescribe since it was in conflict with what their relations with and intentions towards India had appeared to be for years.

There are two views about this in India and abroad. According to the first, which is a minority view in India but more widespread abroad, the Chinese had the limited objective of forcing upon India certain terms for the settlement of a limited dispute about the border. The other view, more widely held in India and by an increasing number of people abroad who were at first sceptical about it, is that this was only a scene in the gradual unfolding of a global drama, or to change the metaphor, China made India the playground of a big time game, which may yet become the biggest the world has seen though by that time the arena may have shifted elsewhere.

There is also a so-called middle view: that the attack was part of a chain but the objective was territorial, to recover one by one the vast estates on the periphery of present China which once belonged to or were within the sway of imperial China

at its height. But this objective is so vast that it is wrong to call it limited; it involves the absorption of the greater part of Asiatic Russia, half of Ladakh and Assam, Sikkim and Bhutan in addition to Tibet, parts of Burma and Thailand and the whole of Annam; Korea and, of course, Formosa. Aggrandizement on such a scale would involve the removal by China of so many and such major obstacles, such drastic softening up of the Big Two, that in the process the world balance would change in China's favour.

As the Sino-Soviet dispute developed its full height the larger view of the Sino-Indian became more plausible. But the limited view is not implausible either and calls for a closer look. Nehru himself appeared to believe at one time, or at least to wish that everyone else would, that the dispute was no more than an escalated misunderstanding. The terrain was among the world's most rugged and desolate, history had added its own obscurities, and being remote for the rulers of both India and China its problems had fallen into such neglect that conflicting interpretations could not be helped with the best will in the world. They should have been resolved in the spirit of the Five Principles, but now that both countries were seized of the matter, he was confident that they would be. He may not have wished to see the true dimensions of this trouble and, therefore, convinced himself that they did not exist, he must have realised that nothing would more surely prize open the whole structure of his foreign policy than a serious dispute with a powerful neighbour, and a Communist power at that. But he might also have believed quite genuinely that the trouble would blow over. When MPs asked him in October 1960 why he had not told them about it earlier, he candidly said, and very likely quite honestly, that he thought an agreement through diplomatic means was quite possible. A year later, when he met Kennedy in November 1961, he did not mention any serious threat from China. It must have been obvious to him that the USA was the only country from which adequate help could come if China should turn hostile; if in spite of that he did not raise this as a problem that worried him, the reason can only be that he did not think the problem existed. Even as late as October 2, 1962, at an eleventh hour conference before it was decided to use force against a Chinese post which had intruded

into Nefu, he told a conference of his Army commanders—that is, if the testimony of Lt.-General Kaul on this point is to be accepted—that he had “good reason to believe that the Chinese would not take any strong action against us”.

When neglected misunderstandings erupted into fighting, the Chinese might have decided to make a thorough job of it while they were at it, though their objectives were still limited only to the border. That is why, after they had shown that they could take what they wanted when they wanted it, they proposed a settlement of which the net effect, at least the immediate one, would have been that they would get Aksai Chin in the west and in the east the McMahon Line would become the accepted border. The fact could also be cited in favour of this view that China had been able to reach border settlements with all countries except India, which had not only resisted China's claims, as others had not, but also set up some new military posts in the disputed area. In any case there was the background of angry estrangement over Tibet. In short, here were all the ingredients for a molehill becoming a mountain, and an angry and arrogant China had made full use of them, disregarding the feelings of an old and faithful friend; but a little tact and patience and all this would vanish. So at least ran the limited view—for a time.

But this did not fit in with three sets of facts: In the first place, China took no initiative to raise this matter and side-stepped all Indian initiatives for talks at a time when, in the prevailing mood of camaraderie, Nehru could have sold almost any kind of settlement to his country. The Chinese have shown considerable cunning in judging the possibilities of moods in other countries, and India's during the heyday of the Panch-sheel they knew better than almost any other country's. Could it be that they did not wish to take up this dispute until they had acquired the necessary strength for their bigger strategy, for which a humiliated India could offer a very suitable spring-board?

Secondly, before, during and after the fighting, the Chinese turned down every offer of a method of settlement which would blur the lesson they wanted every Asian and African country, besides others, to learn: that China took what she wanted and no one was able to do anything about it. Hence its refusal

to accept—and India's insistence that it must accept—any method which involved China vacating her aggression first and then negotiating. Before the fighting, China rejected an Indian proposal which would have allowed it indefinite and unconditional use of the Aksai Chin road so long as the dispute was not settled (and even after that with India's consent, which would have been readily forthcoming if the settlement left the plateau to India). After the fighting it rejected India's offer to refer the whole thing to the International Court or any mutually agreed third party, and even a proposal by a group of Afro-Asian neutrals (though isolating India from this group was one of Peking's larger objectives) which would have put both sides on parity at the start of the talks. Thirdly, during the discussions with India in 1960, China not merely enlarged the dispute about the border but also opened up issues of much larger import to India's security in the north, such as Kashmir's accession to India and her special treaty relations with Bhutan and Sikkim.

It is interesting that Lt.-General Kaul also comes round to this reading of events in his final analysis. At an earlier stage in his book he heaps blame upon Nehru for provoking the Chinese for the sake of appeasing Indian opinion; he clearly implies that India thus brought the war upon herself. But in a later section, when he squarely asks himself "why the Chinese attacked us on 20 October, 1962, or attacked us at all" he comes to entirely different conclusions. He writes: "China attacked us all along our borders in order to establish herself as one of the great powers of the world; to give a warning to Russia and the USA that Asia where China was the strongest power belonged to her sphere of influence and not theirs; she did so to impress countries of Asia—like Nepal, Burma, Ceylon and Cambodia and even Sikkim and Bhutan, and the West—by her military might and thus wean them away from India, as also to show the effectiveness of their own system of government and economic development. China also wanted to show the Russians that India's non-alignment policy was a myth; to humiliate India, which was posing as a rival in the ideological, political and economic fields and shatter its economy and morale as also to discredit our democratic structure, to 'teach a lesson' to the Tibetan people and the Dalai Lama that a

'weak' country like India could give them no material help against a 'strong' country like China. Finally, to divert the attention of her own people from internal difficulties (e.g. failure of the great leap forward etc.) and give them a new unifying slogan, i.e. the 'imperialist threat' from India".

As for the timing of the attack and China's unilateral and sudden withdrawal, the General relates these to the beginning and the end of the Cuban crisis, not to any decisions of the Government of India. With the two Big Powers locked in a serious confrontation of their own China found the time opportune for "taking possession of certain territories which she considered necessary for the defence of Tibet". But she suddenly withdrew when she was "surprised" by the settlement of the Cuban crisis, for which she "vehemently attacked Khrushchev" because "it thwarted her plans".

But whatever be the true scale of China's motives, the effects of its actions were such that even the larger purpose could not have been more adequately served by the results of a single action of one month's duration. They fitted in exactly with the scale of China's ambitions as they stood at the start of 'sixties. India was humbled in the eyes of Afro-Asians, leaving China so clearly the top dog that there was no question of their being impressed any longer by India as the democratic alternative to Communist China. The proud boasts Nehru had made fifteen years earlier were now reduced to mocking fragments. A blow was struck at the Western world as a whole and a basic hypothesis of President Kennedy destroyed. The latter had said only a couple of years before Nefa: "We want India to win that race with China.... If China succeeds and India fails, the economic-development balance of power will shift against us." It did, at least as far as China's victory in Nefa and the enormous demoralization in India could ensure. The club of the non-aligned of which China was not a member, was given a severe jolt by the downfall of its founder. In the years before Nefa it became very obvious that the Brioni trio, especially Nehru and Tito, were more interested in the non-aligned club and China in the Afro-Asian. Non-alignment was the handmaid of peaceful coexistence, therefore, of the Soviet Union also; it was a factor in lowering tensions, which did not suit the maxims of Mao. He was much more at home with the more excitable

Afro-Asians. India became dependent upon Western military help on such a large scale, that non-alignment became for her an outdated shibboleth.

The Soviet Union was exposed to a tight dilemma: it had to choose between a non-aligned "friend" and a Communist "brother"; it could no longer play with both as it could so long as the Sino-Indian trouble was only simmering. Closer to India's frontiers serious doubts were planted in Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan about India's ability to shield them against China; the opinion grew among many in these kingdoms that it was best to come to terms with China if the fate of Tibet was to be avoided. By openly disputing Kashmir's accession to India—throughout the fifties Peking had maintained an ambiguous silence but made enough gestures to convince India that Srinagar's relations with New Delhi were acceptable to China—Peking achieved a double purpose. It created the climate for large-scale unrest in Kashmir, doing now what the Western powers had hitherto done, that is, prevent the internal situation from settling down by keeping up the hope of external intervention. And it acquired excellent leverage for exploiting Indo-Pakistani tension. Both these are processes which have still to run their poisonous course in full. As for the situation within India's frontiers, it could not possibly have suited China's book better. The economy was exposed to a severe strain by adding the burdens of defence to those of development; and in the resulting state of uncertainty many of the sutures of India's multiple society began to betray their weaknesses.



*THE SPIRIT OF CALAMITY*

NON-ALIGNMENT suffered a sudden decline with the attack, all the more sudden for India's failure to make any adjustments in it during the time when China's intentions were becoming obvious to those who were prepared to read the signs. If some of the irritation in Indo-US relations, inherited from the days when non-alignment was a strident virgin, had been removed in order to strengthen India's defence, the precipitate appeal for American help when the attack came would have seemed less incongruous. But until well into the autumn of 1962 a controversy was raging between India and the United States over the supply of F104 fighters to Pakistan while India was protesting that she was not able to get them. The controversy became sharper when India signed up with the Soviet Union instead for the manufacture of MiGs in India.

The chance to improve Indo-US relations was lost when Nehru and Kennedy met in November 1961. Met, but only in the sense that they spent some time together. There was no meeting of minds between the youthful new President and the ageing Prime Minister. No disputes erupted, but no understandings were arrived at either; Kennedy described the meeting, according to Schlesinger, as "a disaster... the worst head of state visit I have had". Five weeks later Indian troops entered Goa, the United States disapproved of the action very strongly, and relations with India took another downward plunge. Thus non-alignment, instead of being adjusted in the direction indicated by the impending Chinese attack, veered in the opposite direction, as so often in the past. But now all of a sudden, MiGs and Goa notwithstanding, it had to make a right about turn. The grin on Mao's face could be seen from New Delhi.

Nehru's immediate predicament was softened by two factors. The United States had not only a very understanding and sympathetic President in the White House, but Galbraith in New Delhi—there could not have been a better combination for ensuring that no one would jeer at the fallen idol. Secondly,

the growing Sino-Soviet conflict was a help. Because of it the Soviet attitude was kinder to India than it might have been. At the start of the conflict Moscow was distinctly cooler towards India. But a couple of weeks later Pravda was at least impartial and if anything tilted a little in India's favour. More important than anything else, the MiG deal was not cancelled; it was delayed, but survived. This enabled India to say with some conviction that she had not entirely taken shelter under the wings of the West.

But nothing could hide the fact that the Western face of non-alignment had undergone an embarrassingly big change. Even Leftist MPs in India, those of the non-Communist Left, were loud in demanding that India must take military help from whatever quarter it came, which, of course, meant the West. At the height of the fighting Nehru had to assure the agitated Indian Parliament: "We are asking for all the assistance we need. There is no inhibition about it." Krishna Menon had to be dropped in the face of such a furore against his conduct of defence that if Nehru had resisted public anger might not have spared him either. The new Defence Minister, Y. B. Chavan, until then Chief Minister of Bombay, said on taking up his new job: "India will move now closer to those who have proved their friendship for her." She would have to deal "in a different manner" with those who had not come to her help. He did not name any names but the facts spoke for themselves.

Immediate plans for military aid were announced by the United States and Britain; Nehru made public and handsome acknowledgment of the promptness. After a massive airlift of emergency supplies, and logistical support, particularly by the USA, without which it would have been impossible for India to strengthen her borders so quickly, plans for long-range defence coordination were laid and brought to impressive fruition in the summer of 1963. Most other forms of help also came from countries committed to the West: even Turkey, more committed than most, offered important ordnance items, though it was prevented from sending them by her Cento ally, Pakistan. Those who could not send material help at least sent messages. But even here most Communist countries were either biased against India or silent, most of the non-aligned were either silent or equivocal. Outright support came only from

a few; Ghana, giving India a lesson in non-alignment, chided Britain for supporting India: "... it would be most detrimental", said Nkrumah to Macmillan "if the impression were created that Commonwealth members did not judge each issue independently but instead sided automatically with a fellow Commonwealth country."

Precisely in the manner that, in slightly different circumstances, Nehru might have done it, Ceylon's Prime Minister, Mrs. Bandaranaike, called a select conference of the non-aligned—Burma, Cambodia, Ghana, Indonesia and the UAR, apart from Ceylon—to consider how they could mediate between two leading Afro-Asians. The sum total of their neutrality in this particular dispute was regarded by India, though she could not say so, with about as much satisfaction as India's must have been regarded by the USA in some of its disputes with the Soviet Union. The presence of only Burma and Egypt at the Colombo Conference aroused no misgivings in India; the rest were believed to be either pro-Peking or afraid of it. A strong delegation from Pakistan hovered in the wings, voicing Peking's opinions as much as its own.

But in the course of the discussions the strength of the main India's argument proved inescapable: that the only fair basis for negotiations would be that without prejudice to its case China should vacate what she had captured by force; otherwise the negotiations would be held under duress and therefore would be unacceptable to India. This point was reflected in the Colombo proposals, as they came to be called because of the meeting place; with a few clarifications, supplied to India by the authors, they were accepted by India on condition that China would also accept them in toto, including the clarifications. China regarded these as "pre-conditions", and would not go beyond accepting the proposals in "principle", an euphemism for rejecting them. That is where matters have stood since then, with no hostilities but no progress towards talks.

By themselves these events would have been enough to give China a strong entry into the affairs of the sub-continent, but the Western powers also succeeded in giving Peking a hand. Indo-Pakistan relations being in the state they were, China and Pakistan were drawn together by their shared hostility towards India. China had already shown her willingness to

play a forcing game by demolishing any expectation India might have had of China's support on Kashmir. To Pakistan China gave a strong nod of recognition by inviting negotiations in the summer of 1962 for demarcation of the border between China and that part of Kashmir which is controlled by Pakistan. China had made it clear that the agreement would be provisional and "after the settlement of the dispute over Kashmir between Pakistan and India the sovereign authorities concerned shall reopen negotiations with the Chinese government". India might have been well advised to be content with this. But she protested to both China and Pakistan, and to the former made the further complaint that Peking had reversed its recognition of Kashmir's accession to India. China replied, as expected, that India "was seeking to make use of the boundary question to sow discord between China and Pakistan". This was a clear enough hint to Pakistan of the strategy it should follow. If there were any gaps in it, the Western powers filled them.

True to the curious pattern of India's relations with the West, that whenever they begin to improve something happens to push them back where they were, Britain and the USA jointly though unwittingly brought the baleful influence of Peking to bear still more clearly upon the Indo-Pakistan equation. The two Western powers not only gave India military help against China but, while the fighting lasted, political support also to ensure that Pakistan would not open up a second front. Kennedy and Macmillan requested Ayub in writing not to press the Kashmir dispute while the Sino-Indian fighting lasted. Pakistan's assurance was not wholehearted. But India had reason to be sure that there was no danger of any adventure by Pakistan, and large numbers of Indian troops were moved from Kashmir and Punjab to Nefsa.

But as soon as the fighting ended the political pressure of the West was turned upon India. Pressure is not a misplaced word here. Nothing less was involved in getting India to agree to talks on Kashmir and other matters with Pakistan; just at this time India would have rather avoided the talks as they would have the effect—which is precisely what they did—of making China a still more palpable presence at the table. But Averel Harriman and Duncan Sandys, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State and the British Commonwealth Secretary respectively,

jointly pressed Nehru to agree to immediate talks with Pakistan, first between Ministers and then at the summit, so that, as the draft announcement agreed between the two countries stated at the end of November, "a renewed effort should be made to resolve outstanding differences between the two countries on Kashmir and other related matters so as to enable India and Pakistan to live side by side in peace and friendship".

The talks could not have got off to a worse beginning. The two Foreign Ministers were to meet in Rawalpindi early in the morning on December 27. The previous evening there had been the customary exchange of hospitality and civilities. But at about ten that night the Indian delegation, back in their billets, were amazed when told that the Sino-Pakistan border negotiations to which India had objected had not only concluded but resulted in an agreement which would give China a slice of Kashmir. The agreement was announced about half an hour earlier, a good example of the affrontery of Chinese timing (and whether it was only Chinese or Pakistani also was one of the many doubts in the minds of the Indian delegation). The Pakistan Foreign Secretary, Dehlvi, widely known as the head of a China lobby in his ministry, dismissed the timing as something which had "just happened" with "nothing sinister in it". But the Indian delegation had to consider seriously whether it should go into the conference room at all.

Opinion in favour of a low posture prevailed and the talks began. Not only began but lasted three days. Not only that but hatched successive rounds of meetings; for four days in New Delhi in January 1963; three days in Karachi in February; three days in Calcutta in March; four days in Karachi in April; two days in New Delhi in May; in this last round they fizzled out. During the third round, in February, it appeared that the discussions were getting somewhere. They had moved off from the preliminary skirmishes in which India's attempt was to give a higher priority to "other related matters" and Pakistan's to shove them aside until agreement was reached on Kashmir. In the second round, in New Delhi in January, they had also got over the next big hurdle of Pakistan insisting that it would be satisfied with nothing less than getting Kashmir in one way or another, and India making it plain that nothing of the kind was going to happen. When the two sides met for the third

time they took up the only approach which has appeared practicable to many people in India and perhaps to some in Pakistan: that Kashmir should be divided, each side more or less keeping what it had. What they now began to talk about was the actual line of division, and optimism raised its little head gingerly when India agreed to see whether Pakistan could be given something out of the areas on the Indian side of the cease-fire line.

Maps were taken out, lines were drawn, and to the surprise of public opinion in both countries, sitting after sitting for the three days in Karachi ended in public expression of extreme politeness and cordiality towards each other by the two Foreign Ministers. Alternative divisions were discussed in some detail. India proposed a line which would give Pakistan 2,000 square miles from the Indian side of Kashmir, leaving about 50,000 square miles to India and about 35,000 to Pakistan. But when the examination proceeded it turned out that Pakistan's view of divisions was something quite different: it would leave India only a couple of thousand square miles of Jammu, giving to Pakistan not only the whole of the Kashmir Valley which is predominantly Muslim, but the whole of Ladakh which is Buddhist and nearly the whole of Jammu which is Hindu. It was only a matter of time now when the talks would again break out into a rash of disagreements and denunciations. This happened in New Delhi in May.

Within a couple of months of this failure the expected became obvious: that the only winner in this game was China. The hopes aroused in Pakistan (and the disturbance released in Kashmir, as events were very soon to show) by the Western intervention failed, leaving behind a trail of bitterness—in India because the talks were started at all, in Pakistan because India's arm was not twisted any further. So Pakistan's eyes turned rapidly towards the nearby neighbour who had been looming larger and larger on the Himalayan horizon in the past couple of years. President Ayub declared in the beginning of July that if India continued to receive military hardware from the West, Pakistan would be compelled "to take refuge under China". His Foreign Minister went a step further: postulating the imaginary possibility of India attacking Pakistan he said: "Pakistan will not be alone if she becomes the

victim of any aggression. It would also involve the largest state in Asia." Nehru described Pakistan's "wooing" of China as "one of the worst examples of blackmail". But that neither deterred China from responding, nor was it expected to.

What is more surprising is that it did not deter the United States and Britain from trying again in July and August 1963, after the bilateral talks between India and Pakistan had failed, to get the two countries to agree to mediation over Kashmir. President Ayub made his acceptance of the proposal conditional upon "a categorical commitment by India" that it would abide by the mediator's verdict and would agree to settle the issue on the basis of self-determination. Nehru on his side did not appear to object to mediation so much, if a suitable mediator could be found, as he did to what he knew to be Pakistan's purpose in agreeing to mediation. He rejected any proposal for the valley of Kashmir either being divided between India and Pakistan or placed under the joint control of the two countries or internationalized. In announcing his rejection he confirmed that when he did at one stage agree to discuss the division of *Kashmir* Pakistan laid claims to the entire watersheds of Chenab, the Jhelum and the Indus rivers, which constitute between them virtually the whole of Kashmir.

Nehru also scouted the Western expectation that if only the problem of Kashmir were settled, Pakistan would stand side by side with India to oppose China. "We used to be told by many friends, even by friends in Pakistan, that a settlement of the Kashmir issue was essential to the interests of the joint defence of the two countries. At one time Pakistan made a grievance of the fact that while she was offering joint defence to us we were not willing to accept it. That the proposal for joint defence was no more than a propaganda stunt has now been made perfectly clear by the statements of Pakistani leaders. They have publicly declared that even if the Kashmir issue was settled amicably, Pakistan would not go either to the defence of India against China or change her friendly relations with Peking."

Nehru's complaint was not entirely fair to Pakistan insofar as the earlier offer, if it existed, was made by Pakistan at a time when India had not yet suffered its humiliating defeat at the hands of China; after the defeat it was unreasonable to expect any neighbour of China to put its bet upon India. Nevertheless

Nehru's statement shows the state of mind prevailing in India — it was no less rigid in Pakistan — at the time that the Western powers tried to get India to give concessions on Kashmir as a price for joint defence against China. Nehru made the meaning clearer when he said in June 1963 that it was a mistake to have linked the solution of the Kashmir problem with China's attack. This he said "was most unfortunate" because the attack had made "it far more difficult and unwise for us to give in to Pakistan. It had given Pakistan an opportunity to blackmail us and others".

China's reward for Pakistan was not long in coming. At the beginning of the following year, Chou En-lai went to Pakistan in the course of an eight-week salesmanship tour through the Afro-Asian countries, and in a joint communique with Ayub he came out, for the first time, in clear support of Pakistan's demands about Kashmir. The main purpose of his tour was also of interest to India: he was canvassing support for an Afro-Asian conference in opposition to a conference of the non-aligned countries which Yugoslavia, Egypt and India were planning. By the time the tour ended, India's relations with Afro-Asians and the non-aligned became as thoroughly enmeshed in the aggressive diplomacy of Peking as those with Pakistan already were. Everywhere Chou En-lai reaped the benefits of the sharp defeat China had inflicted upon India.

The Western and Chinese exercises in influencing the affairs of the sub-continent had their repercussions in Kashmir also. Between the end of the Western exercise and Chou En-lai's visit to Pakistan a curious agitation developed in Srinagar which, retrospectively, though it did not appear to at the time, fits neatly into the wider context of India's relations with Pakistan and Pakistan's with China. To all outward appearance it was one of those agitations which make foreign observers wonder whether they will ever be able to understand the purpose and direction of Indian politics. But its deeper layers were more familiar, and some of its repercussions painfully so.

The prize possession of one of the biggest mosques in Srinagar is a relic of the Prophet, a hair of his beard. On Christmas Day, 1963, rumour spread throughout Srinagar that the hair had been stolen. Suspicion turned upon Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed; it was thought he had engineered the theft so



that the resulting furore would convince New Delhi that whatever good the *Kamaraj* plan<sup>1</sup> might do elsewhere, in Srinagar the iron rule of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed was indispensable. On December 26 there were huge demonstrations, first in the mosque and then in the streets of Srinagar, and large-scale arson against conspicuous property owned by Ghulam Mohammed. The trouble went on for over a week; the Bakshi had released forces (if he had engineered the theft) which he was unable to control. On January 3 the relic was mysteriously restored to its rightful place but by that time rumour was ready to play the second act. Suspicion spread through the town that the relic had been replaced by a fake. The agitation did not assume an overtly anti-Indian character; in fact, the committee conducting it asked for ever-increasing intervention by New Delhi and rule by the President to replace the rule of the clique Ghulam Mohammed had placed in power when he resigned office himself under the *Kamaraj* plan. But anti-Indian overtones quickly appeared when elements in favour of Kashmir's accession to Pakistan took a hand. The united "front" of the agitation was a demand for the release of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, imprisoned in Kashmir for the preceding eleven years. But behind the front there were larger purposes as well.

On January 25, the agitation became violent and four people were killed in police firings. This produced a chain reaction in distant eastern India and still more distant East Pakistan. In both parts the most serious communal rioting since 1950 erupted, claiming perhaps 2,000 lives in the first three months of 1964. Infuriated by allegations that Islam was being tampered with in Srinagar, Muslims of Khulna in East Pakistan attacked Hindu localities, killing 29, according to East Pakistan Government but 200 according to the Indian Government's estimates. On January 11, serious counter-rioting occurred in Calcutta and the police opened fire more than fifty times in a single day. Indian official casualty estimates were 208 killed by mob violence and 56 in police action; Pakistan's estimates: 500 killed. The next step in the chain was rioting in Naryanganj in East Pakistan. Casualties: 150 according to the East

<sup>1</sup> See p. 192.

Pakistan Government, 1,000 according to Reuter. Retaliation in India followed in the steel towns for Jamshedpur and Rourkela. More than 250 persons, nearly all of them Muslims were killed. In East Pakistan by this time the rioting had developed into a general attack on non-Muslims and about 75,000 non-Muslim tribesmen fled into the eastern States of India, particularly Assam; about 20 000 of them were Roman Catholics and 15,000 Baptists. From these instabilities much graver events were to flow in 1965, with Kashmir as the immediate provocation and Peking providing skilful instigation.

Other effects upon India's domestic economy and politics were equally severe. The most drastic chapter of the Constitution, containing emergency provisions which, for all practical purposes, give the Centre the powers of a unitary government, was brought into play. Powers were assumed over the citizen which the normal provisions of the Constitution specifically prohibit. Included among these is the power of summary arrest and detention with no right of appeal to courts, not even for the enforcement of Fundamental Rights which are among the entrenched clause of the Constitution. A rigorous "code" was clamped down upon the Press. At the time they were imposed these restrictions were generally accepted as essential. But when they continued month after month, and got two more leases of life as a result of Pakistan's attacks in July and September 1965, public resentment against them began to mount. From the end of 1965 they became, along with the spiralling of economic distress, a powerful aid for the rehabilitation of the Communists. Although split among themselves into pro-Peking and pro-Moscow factions, the Communists not only could come together on these two issues but draw all other elements of protest together in "united front" agitations against the Government.

The financial burdens of the emergency also began to spell themselves out immediately. In the state of emotionalism released by the Chinese attack, the Government decided that the pace of planned investment need not be slackened to meet the more urgent demands of defence. The defence budget for 1963-64 went up to \$ 1742 million, an increase of 13 per cent over the previous fiscal year (although even at this increased figure it was less than 5 per cent of the gross national product).

A five-year defence plan was drawn up which would cost \$10,000 million, 12 per cent of it to be met out of foreign assistance and all the rest from home-grown resources. But at the same time capital outlay on development was also pushed up by a little under a third to \$1654 million. The 1963-64 budget slapped on new taxes which amounted to over \$550 million a year; this was almost three times the previous highest taxation figure for any year and about four times the average of the preceding two years. The strains imposed upon the economy started showing their effects only a few months later.

In politics, the shock wave of the Chinese attack was immediately felt in the most appropriate quarter, in the Defence Ministry and by its political head, Krishna Menon. There had been demands for his resignation even earlier, but these had mostly come from the right wing of Indian politics. By then he was intensely disliked for his suspected sympathies with Communism, for his playing down the threat from Communist China, for his lukewarm attitude to the suppression of Tibet, for his endless baiting of the Western powers because of their military alliances with Pakistan, whom Menon is quoted to have once described as India's enemy number one, not China. But so long as these attacks came only from the Right Krishna Menon was safe. The Left reaction in his favour was equally strong and Nehru had no difficulty in playing off one against the other. His influence on Nehru's foreign policy was also not unpopular. Sympathy for China was so widespread in India for so many years, and the dislike of Pakistan so intense, that Krishna Menon, in fact, rode a popular wave when he gave India's defences an orientation towards Pakistan and away from China. Nor were the Western powers so popular in India that any one who baited them should be unpopular.

But the balance suddenly turned against Menon when the attack came from China, not Pakistan. He was no longer able to draw upon his popularity with the Left. When in the course of the fighting, it was discovered how terribly ill-equipped the Indian forces were, the one claim Menon used to make fell to pieces: that he had modernized the force's equipment, and by transferring many defence-oriented industries to the public sector, especially by placing them under the charge of his own Ministry, he had given the forces a good techno-industrial base.

The Chinese forces turned out to be far better equipped and supplied. Not only India's military intelligence but the organization of logistics showed no anticipation that an attack might come from the North, in such strength and in NEFA. Within ten days of the attack anger against Menon became irresistible. Not only those who suspected—and there were many who did—that he had deliberately left India defenceless against China, but everyone except a fringe on the Left turned against him. The day the Chinese took Tawang, the farthest Indian roadhead in a critical area of NEFA, the Swatantra Party, already in the vanguard of the attack on Menon, made his dismissal a condition for its support in the emergency; its leaders openly dubbed him a Communist. The Jan Sangh joined the Swatantra three days later.

In the last few days of October powerful coordination developed between Menon's critics inside the Congress and outside it, and Nehru began to temporize. On October 29, he admitted, "I do not know if there is any adequate answer" to the charges against Menon. Others remained convinced that there was only one answer: Menon should go. As the pressure mounted Nehru began to yield. On October 31 he took over the Defence portfolio himself but put Menon in charge of Defence Production, showing partial but not full disapproval of Menon's policies. The pressure did not abate and Nehru made one more concession. When the responsibilities of the new portfolio were announced, they were found to be smaller than expected. Specifically excluded from them was purchase of arms from abroad, which, of course, meant mainly from the Western powers; they were not to be exposed to Menon any longer. But the critics were unrelenting and not all the stalling Nehru did could save Menon in the end.

The fighting on the frontiers had barely subsided when fissures in the Congress, always present beneath the surface, grew dangerously wider. Not content with bringing about the downfall of Menon the right-wing in the Congress party joined hands once again with sections of the Opposition to attack K. D. Malaviya, Minister for Petroleum and Menon's closest associate in the Government. He had accepted election funds from a firm of manganese ore exporters and the Opposition succeeded in spotting irregularities in the subsequent grant of

certain concessions and licences to this firm. The charge was pressed in Parliament with meticulous detail, an inquiry into the Ministry's decisions was demanded by the Opposition on the floor of the House and by critics within the Congress at closed-door meetings of the party. Once more Nehru temporized, but ultimately he had to yield and in the summer of 1963 Malaviya resigned.

Upon the demoralized Congress and especially the Prime Minister, the Opposition showered some further heavy blows. On May 19 the Congress suffered severe reverses in three critical bye-elections to Parliament. As indications of the decline of the Congress since the attack by the Chinese began, these reverses were shocking. One of Nehru's most vitriolic critics, Acharya Kripalani, standing as a joint candidate of most of the non-Communist Opposition parties, captured by 55,000 votes—and from a Minister, a senior colleague of Nehru—a seat which the Congress had held by 17,000 only a year earlier. On the same day the Minister of Information and Broadcasting lost by 57,000 votes to the stormy leader of the Socialists; Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, a seat which the Congress had earlier held by 14,000 votes. In Rajkot hitherto a stronghold of the Congress Party, the General Secretary of the Swatantra party, Minoo Masani, took by about 47,000 votes a seat held with a majority of 41,000 by U. N. Dhebar, at one time President of the Congress.

The Congress also secured a notable success on the same day. One of its little known candidates defeated the General Secretary of the Jan Sangh by 60,000 votes in a constituency which one year earlier had been won by the Jan Sangh by 8,000 votes. But the demoralization in the Congress was such that the impact of the defeats upon its morale was much more than of the success. The message went home that unless the party picked itself up quickly it would probably go down in the deluge of disaffection which had been released by the defeat suffered at China's hand.

The Prime Minister appealed to his colleagues "to go to the people to preach principles of the Congress" and "to pull the Congress out of the rut into which it had got in many places in the country". To his warnings were added those by K. Kamaraj, Chief Minister of Madras, a name so far not very

well known outside his State but soon to become a new star in this time of twilight. Between them Kamaraj and Nehru drew up the famous Plan to which the former gave his name and which in the summer of 1963 was to shake the Congress and its Governments in New Delhi and in several of the States. The Plan came at one of those psychological moments when the expectation that something is going to happen gives to any happening an unexpected momentum. The plan called for "sacrifice", a word which at one time, years ago, used to reflect the faith of the Congress in itself but since then had been only a shibboleth. With the backing of Nehru, Kamaraj called upon party leaders in the Government to demonstrate that they were not addicted to the plums of office and were willing to "sacrifice" the rewards of power for the sake of getting back among the people to revitalize the party. Nehru himself was among the first to offer to resign. He was urgently dissuaded by the Working Committee and the All India Congress Committee, but the offer did its trick. Within a few days Nehru was overwhelmed by offers of Ministers in the Central and State Cabinets to resign and take on any functions in the party he might allot to them.

Within a week of the announcement of the Plan, Nehru told the Congress Working Committee that all the Ministers of the Central Government, all the Chief Ministers of the States and a number of Ministers of the State Cabinets had put in their offers of resignation. The country awaited with keen expectation what he would do with this dramatic chance for a change suddenly put in his hands by the party at the bidding of one of its lesser known and provincial leaders, and Nehru announced on August 24 that six Central Ministers and the Chief Ministers of six States would go. Morarji Desai, Finance Minister; Lal Bahadur Shastri, Home Minister; S. K. Patil, Food Minister; Jagjivan Ram, Minister of Transport and Communications — all four of them people often mentioned as possible successors to Nehru — and Gopala Reddy, Minister of Information and Broadcasting, and K. L. Shrimali, Minister of Education, would resign at the Centre. In the States, Kamaraj himself would go and with him the Chief Minister of Orissa, Biju Patnaik, the Chief Minister of Bihar, B. N. Jha, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, C. B. Gupta, the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh,

Mandloi, and the Prime Minister of Kashmir, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed.

In choosing replacements Nehru took a few other steps to improve the image of the Congress. With Menon and Malaviya out of power and in disgrace, the confusion in the Left-wing of the Congress was so great that there was a clear possibility of excessive resurgence on the Right; the imbalance would not have been good for the Congress or the country. Nehru brought T. T. Krishnamachari into the Central Cabinet as Finance Minister in place of Morarji Desai, the latter a rigid Rightist, the former at least mildly popular with the moderate Left. More convincingly Nehru made Ashok Mehta Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, next only to himself as Chairman. Ashok Mehta's Praja Socialist Party split on this issue between those who believed that a reformed Congress was still the best party for the country and to reform it a service, and those who thought it so irretrievably Rightist that India would never recover its socialist direction unless the Congress was thrown out first. In the choice of the States' Chief Ministers ideological preferences were not very clear. But it did happen as part of the chain of events released by Kamaraj that Uttar Pradesh, a political heavy-weight among the States, acquired a mildly Leftist Chief Minister, Mrs. Sucheta Kripalani, wife of the Opposition leader, Acharya Kripalani; and Kashmir acquired G. M. Sadiq, who was at one time believed almost to be a Communist.

A few months later, in January 1964, the Congress gave itself another doze of its indefinable socialism when it met at Bhuvaneshwar in Orissa and adopted a resolution which the party's Left now quotes almost as often as at one time it quoted the Avadi resolution. At Bhuvaneshwar the Congress once more mixed emphasis upon "continually rising levels of production" with its oft-repeated ideological programme; to that it now added ceilings upon private incomes and property, especially inherited wealth and urban property. It did not go as far as Menon, Malaviya and some others wanted it to go when they demanded nationalization of banks, state trading in all essential commodities and the taking over of rice mills. But it did recommend that a larger share of capital gains should be secured by the State and a much larger proportion of unearned income

should be appropriated by it.

Whether the Kamaraj plan and the Bhuvaneshwar resolution achieved their stated purposes is extremely doubtful. The socialist rhetoric of Bhuvaneshwar remained only rhetoric, as earlier of Avadi. The Kamaraj plan became an important link in a chain of events which was to help India cope with the dreaded question "After Nehru, Who?" in the summer of 1964. But there was no sign in the year between the making of the plan and the death of Nehru that the Congress Party's contacts with the people were any more vital now or that there was any more sense of purpose and direction in the party's affairs. In fact, the Kamaraj plan itself became a victim of that civil war in the party to end which was one of its principal aims. It may not be true but it began to be whispered—to be shouted a year later—that Nehru used the plan to oust from office anyone who could have taken advantage of Nehru's growing physical weakness and ease him out against his wishes.

In the States the successors jostled each other shamelessly and openly. The outgoing Chief Ministers of U.P., Orissa and Kashmir only allowed their own devoted followers to succeed them. In Gujarat, a worse case, the hand of Morarji Desai—himself one of the trophies of the Kamaraj plan—was seen in the downfall of the Chief Minister, Dr Jivraj Mehta, later India's High Commissioner in London, who was very close indeed to Nehru, his successor was a nominee of Morarji Desai. In Kerala a factional dispute brought about the downfall of the Congress Government. What was worse, Nehru continued to look with indulgence upon unmistakable signs of corruption in high places in the Congress and its governments, signs which were a great deal more responsible for the decline of its prestige than any defeats inflicted upon it by the Opposition parties. The plan did hardly anything to stop the disintegration of the Congress which, although noticeable for some time, was given a powerful push by the Chinese attack.

The blow Peking dealt India's Communists was also serious. For some time the party had been obviously under the strain of the Sino-Soviet conflict. But in April 1962, it made a strong bid for unity by electing a centerist, S. A. Dange, as its chairman and as its General Secretary E. M. S. Namboodiripad, the best known among the moderate leftists, if such a term may be



used in the constantly splintering spectrum of Communist policies. But the bid stood little chance of surviving the new strains created by the Chinese attack. Within a few days of the invasion of NEFA, 8,000 demonstrators mustered by the Jana Sangh and P.S.P. wrecked the Communist Party office in New Delhi. The next day on November 1, 1962 the National Council of the party issued a strong statement condemning "Chinese aggression" and fully supporting the Government of India's view that discussions with Peking could take place only when the Chinese withdrew from areas captured by them after September 8. It described Chinese claims upon Indian territory as "completely untenable" and said the crossing of the McMahon Line "under any excuse or pretence whatsoever indisputably constitutes aggression."

But before this statement could succeed in convincing the country that the party was nationalist before it was Communist, three important members of its left faction resigned from the Central Secretariat and even Namboodiripad asked to be relieved of his post as General Secretary. No statements were issued by any of the four but enough was known about their departure to convince the country that at least some in the party were not to be trusted as being wholeheartedly behind the National Council resolution. There were few protests when, as the Sino-Indian conflict proceeded, more than 350 Communists were arrested throughout India. Within the party the schism became wider, not narrower, and in the autumn of 1964, total. On September 8 the Communist group in Parliament split between its left and pro-Peking wing and the right wing which, in the Sino-Soviet conflict, was closer to Moscow. Namboodiripad also broke away from the C.P.I. and formed the Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist).

The breakaway left group in Parliament, led by A. K. Gopalan, took away sufficient members with it for the Communist Party to lose the distinction of being the largest opposition group and for its leader to lose his position as Leader of Opposition. Both positions were now taken by the Swantantra Party. The National Council lost nearly all its Left-wing members who at that time constituted only about a third of the total strength of the Council but in the coming months were to demonstrate that they had a greater capacity than the Right-wing to build

up their cadres among the people and to mobilize support. Certainly it was the Left-wing, not the Right, which became a serious threat to political stability in certain parts of India when Nehru's daughter became Prime Minister.<sup>1</sup>

The last years of Nehru's life were, indeed, dark. They were burdened as much by the weight of adverse events as by the mood of pessimism which swept through the country as Nehru's health visibly declined and his grip on affairs grew weaker. The air in Delhi caught his sickness. Only nine months before his death the Congress had shrunk back from the very thought of his resigning under the Kamaraj plan. But this was, in fact, only a piece of hypocrisy. Among the top leaders of the party there was more jostling to be first in the line of succession to him than sorrow at his decline or sincerity in the wish that he would continue for some years longer. A few might have genuinely hoped that he would, because they were frightened at the prospect of a war of succession and could not see who the winner would be. But generally in the country the mood had been and for some time—it had started coming to the surface well before the Chinese attack—that a younger leader or at least someone more fit in body and resilient in mind should take over.

The surest sign of the country's sickness, as a result of Nehru's, was the widespread brooding over drawbacks, a tendency to cry louder and more often than the circumstances called for, to magnify each failure and defect and to overlook what had, in fact, been achieved. Perhaps this was only the lassitude which follows an extraordinary exercise, specially of the emotions, such as had occurred in the immediate wake of the Chinese attack. But even people who had reason to know better completely gave up faith in the country's future. Foreign policy, for example, was loudly declared by everyone to have been a bigger failure than it was. Grief over the lack of support for India from the Afro-Asian countries was so great that few people found the time to notice how directly as a result of the disruptive diplomacy practised by China, India had now acquired the opportunity of developing close and friendly relations and, what is more important, a community of interest with both the

<sup>1</sup> See the last chapter, *Uncertain India*.

super powers. This should have far outweighed the effect upon morale which the Afro-Asians' indifference to India's fate should have had; but it was not allowed to. The riots of 1964<sup>1</sup> were regarded almost with the same sense of despondency as those seventeen years earlier at the time of partition. The country's disintegration was believed imminent because it was feared that ethnic and religious passions would take the place of the linguistic which had been tamed during the catharsis of the formation of linguistic states.

There were, indeed, some genuinely troublesome omens. The demand for a Punjabi-speaking State was beginning to assume a communal colour; opposition to it was becoming concentrated among the Hindus, support among the Sikhs. Successive threats of self-immolation by fasting were being held out by the leaders of the Sikh community; and some Hindu leaders were threatening to retaliate in kind. A Sikh leader was attempting to make the demand for a Punjabi-speaking State an international affair by threatening to die unless "some friendly country like Britain came in and raised the issue in the United Nations". In 1961 the dispute between the Assamese-speaking people of Assam and the non-Assamese was developing not only into a clash between the Assamese and Bengalis, but also—and a more dangerous one—between plainsmen and hill tribes. In Central India the Adibasis, a varied and multitudinous tribal community, were in a state of severe disturbance. Armed with bows and arrows they were attacking police parties, and in March 1961 twelve Adibasis were killed in retaliatory firing by the police. At a convention of Muslims one of Nehru's close associates, Dr. Syed Mahmood who was once a Union Minister, was loudly blaming the Hindus for treating the Muslims as "suspicious criminals and traitors, unworthy to hold any positions of trust and responsibility". But none of these problems, severally or together, could measure up in severity to those which had been overcome in the first five years of independence. The difference was that at that time there was purposeful leadership at the top and below a growing degree of confidence in the future. Now both were lacking.

There was similar despondency, in excess of the facts, about

<sup>1</sup> See p. 368.

problems of government which had not been considered so far to be of an unmanageable scale. The pace of the bureaucratic machinery, never fast, had been slowing down for some time, contributing almost as much as anything else to the growing uncertainty about the success of planning. Opportunities were being missed and resources wasted because of inordinate delays in taking simple decisions. But the desire everywhere was not to face the problem and solve it but to give in to collective wringing of hands; this became the pastime even of those who had the competence to improve matters if they would. The cabinet system was in disarray. After the shocking state of our defences became known, many other things leaked out which showed that there was no collective responsibility or leadership at the top. Each Minister functioned with an autonomy to which he had no right; or else he thought all he needed was to have the ear of Nehru and for the rest he could go his own way, ignoring cabinet responsibility. Deplorable incohesion in the Cabinet came to light when one of the seniormost civil servants and among the ablest, who was once a secretary to the Cabinet himself, resigned as part of the L.I.C. shake-up and began to speak out his mind more freely.

But this was not a sudden ailment; under Nehru the Cabinet had always functioned as a roomful of satraps, never as a team. Twice in the past, Cabinet Ministers had resigned in protest against not being consulted—this was one of the grievances of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and later of Sir C. D. Deshmukh, when they quit the Cabinet. But somehow now it appeared to be a sign of doom. Government inefficiency began to be deplored—without anyone doing anything to remove it, of course—as though it were a sudden and new phenomenon. The public forgot even the few facts which had come to light immediately after the Chinese attack to prove how culpably the Government had neglected the country's defences through inefficiency, indifference and worse. The more serious aspects of this dereliction of the Government's duties did not come to light until a few years later, when Lt.-General Kaul published *The Untold Story*.<sup>1</sup> But the outcome of the fighting had conclusively shown that the Government had been seriously remiss in its duties.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 283-85.

and that at a time when, in the late fifties and the early sixties, Nehru was still riding the crest of a wave. Yet the popular gloom in Nehru's last year was such as though the inadequacies of his Government had been discovered for the first time.

Talk of corruption was everywhere, more than corruption itself was. The facts, of course, were bad enough. Ever since T. T. Krishnamachari was forced to resign as Finance Minister in 1956 over scandals discovered in the investment of the funds of the Life Insurance Corporation, the suspicion had been strong that much else might be rotten in the state of affairs. It was. The resignation of K. D. Malaviya confirmed this, as also did the vehemence of the controversy around the functioning of three Chief Ministers—of Punjab, Orissa and Kashmir. But no comfort was drawn from the fact that India was one of the few countries which had won their freedom after the Second World War in which real or alleged corruption was so much a matter of agitated public concern. Many things which in India raise a public scandal would pass either un-noticed or would be accepted as normal in many countries. A strain of saintly politics, as Morris-Jones calls it, represented by men like the Bhoodan leader, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, and Jayaprakash Narayan, so heavily frowns upon all signs of corruption that it makes corruption seem larger than life-size. India is fortunate in having these voices of protest. But when the state of the public mind is as it was during the last year or so of Nehru's life, their denunciation of defects tends to conceal almost everything else from the public view.

The corrosion by pessimism continued long after Nehru's death, refusing to yield to one of the greatest political achievements of the Congress—the smooth transition from Nehru to Shastri—assuming strange forms from time to time, one of the strangest being a wholly uncharacteristic chauvinism. By as much as India became unsure of herself after Nehru's death, burdened with a sense of its weakness, she became or at least sounded recklessly eager to take on all enemies at once. Until she regained self-assurance and poise as a result of winning the September War in 1965, India seemed over anxious to take offence at anything said by anyone, friend or foe, with

<sup>1</sup> See p. 217.

good intentions or bad. In relations with Pakistan it showed an inflexibility which cost it some of the goodwill of those who would be friends. In the face of the United States it raised the clenched fist, while at the same time keeping the other hand outstretched for aid. Shastri reversed the trend once he had established himself as a leader who could be strong when necessary. But till then there was a kind of readiness to take offence which is as good a sign as any of a sense of insecurity and inferiority. Under the surface these feelings must have existed for a long time. Otherwise they would not have assumed such a dominating form at such short notice. But the fact that they did, is proof of the depth of the blow which the Chinese attack delivered at the psychological personality of India. The first that India shook was that of the defeated, and it was not until the autumn of 1965 that India began to show signs of genuine self-confidence and some returning strength.

*MUD AND MARBLE*

## COPING WITH PROPHECY

NO MAN'S work is easy to judge, least of all, of a man who was so exceptional in so many ways; few in this or any other country have equalled the span of his rule—17 years; fewer still have presided over so much change. No one perhaps had so much room within him for the co-existence of contradictions; no country could have offered him as many as India. This makes it impossible to put within the capsule of a judgement, or to put alongside any scale of measurement the changes he wrought in the world that India is within herself.

But because he thought and wrote about himself so often, it is easier to see what his aims were, and with them in mind to see how far he succeeded. An obvious point to begin with is the unity, both of the country and the party, which he put above everything else, above adherence to any of his other objectives and principles. How united did he leave the country and the party? Did he sacrifice to unity more of his aims than was necessary? Did the sacrifice itself become a threat to the unity he desired so much?

Unity in a very basic sense, the prevention of dismemberment of the country at birth had been achieved before the start of the Years of Nehru. What was left to him to ensure was its continuance, and its further evolution into an operational reality: not only its continuance within his own lifetime and only by the magic of his own pre-eminence—that would not have been an adequate purpose for such a formative leader—but by the strength of the institutions which he was developing, so that it would continue and become growingly operative even without him. Creative unity in other words, not merely the biological survival of the country during the lifetime of its leader. The measure of his greatness is the extent to which he can be said to have ensured this; this is also the measure he prescribed for himself.

Authoritative forecasts cited in the opening pages of this book were of secessions, not merely peripheral such as still might occur but of large and essential territories, ultimately leading not only to dismemberment of the country but its dissolution. This danger the era of Nehru thwarted by creating vested interests in unity which outweigh the potential for secession. The first vested interests are the all-India parties, whose unifying role has been discussed in an earlier Chapter.<sup>1</sup> With the exception of the DMK in South India—the other exception, the Akali Dal in Punjab, has lost the fountain of its inspiration with the acceptance of its demand for a Punjabi-speaking State—all India parties have gained so rapidly at the cost of parities which have only local objectives that political dynamics are largely of their making now. They do not yet see the chance that they will capture power in Delhi; if they did they would be even more reluctant to run away with one part of the cake at the risk of losing the whole. But their all-India orientation grows every year. The one charge which even the most suspect of all parties, the Communist, is most vehement in refuting is that it supports secession somewhere or other. Now there is no party left anywhere, except a few in the northern rim of the country, which does not pay homage to the unity of India.

Anxiety on this score did not, of course, disappear from the Indian scene during Nehru's lifetime; nor has it since, and at times in the past three years has been conspicuous. But more conspicuous is the fact, often overlooked in the midst of current anxieties, that much bigger problems, which would have eroded not the fringes but the heartland of India, have been overcome in the past twenty years in the course of making the country a nation. They have been discussed in earlier chapters and need not be done again, except to repeat that in the first five years India was closer to total dismemberment than it has been since or is likely ever to be—through *these* causes.

In the next five years it went through the paroxysm of the linguistic division of states and lived with the fear that now everything was lost. Something quite obviously was lost when the centrifugal tendencies implicit in federal constitution coincided with the self-awareness of each State as a distinct linguis-

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 127-28.



tic and cultural entity. The combination has added to the assertiveness of the States against the Centre. But the opportunity for avoiding it vanished long before the fifties; by that time the demand was so strong and widespread that even a totalitarian regime would have found it difficult to resist. Seeing what the options were it has turned out to be better that linguism was accepted and absorbed; suppressed, it would have become poisonous and disruptive. States which were linguistically reorganized are not proving more difficult for the Centre than those which were not; nor are they proving less loyal to the country.

The tensions between the Centre and the States are indeed one of the uncertainties hanging over India; their full stretch will be seen when opposition parties with stable majorities capture one or more States, especially if the same party takes more than one State.<sup>1</sup> The record of relations between the Congress Government at the Centre and a non-Congress Government in a State is a discouraging one; the Centre's dealings have been questionable. The Congress could get away with it because it had to deal with only one Opposition State at a time, and in most cases could make out at least a plausible case for putting the State under the special powers of the President. Will it repeat the performance, and with what consequences, when there is more than one Opposition State and they gang up? It is not unlikely the Congress had these possibilities in mind when it made tentative moves at Bangalore to enhance the powers of the Centre.

But the overall prospect was reasonably well cleared by Nehru, or well enough for it to have remained relatively unclouded at least in this respect despite the tragedies which in other ways have befallen India in the past five years. The same web of inter-dependence, especially economic, covers the Centre and the States; it has not grown weaker since then and has probably grown stronger. Within the Congress the tendency is again visible, after a temporary eclipse under Shastri's growing pre-eminence in his last few months, for a

<sup>1</sup> Only in one State, Madras, has a single party, the DMK captured a stable majority as a result of the Fourth General Election; no party has formed the government in more than one state on its own, except the Congress.

Central power structure to be compounded out of elements drawn from many different States, and it is truer than it was<sup>1</sup> once that if the general political fabric does not decay, the particular strains of federalism will be absorbed by the Indian Constitution as they have been by others. For the normal recalcitrance of a non-Congress Government in a State the Congress Government at the Centre has been prepared by the Congress Government in the States; often they have differed little from non-Congress Government. For abnormal recalcitrance or unconstitutional opposition, the Centre has quite ample powers.<sup>1</sup> They will be invoked by any party in power at the Centre which has an all-India stake or orientation; none other is likely to come into power in New Delhi.

Attempts at breaking away may yet be made of course, in one corner of India or another, and if they succeeded against the wishes of the country they would loosen up the unity of the whole. But sufficient means exist for forestalling such attempts, and if they were used, they would be supported by the people unless the means or the specific end were manifestly unjust. The threat of a crack may be on a remote part of the rim. In Bombay people may be less concerned than the Assamese are about the demand for independence by the hill tribes of the north-east frontier; concern over Kashmir may be a little less in Madras than in Delhi. But all that distance does is to reduce rigidities. Some concessions to separatism in order to deflate it may appear to be outrageous in a neighbouring area; further off they would be accepted as not an unreasonable price if a larger cause is served better that way. But distance does not any longer breed indifference to the territorial integrity of the country as a whole. No party could hope to win votes in Bombay if it works for the separation of parts of Assam from India; even more is this true about Kashmir.

This is the beneficial obverse of a troublesome fact of Indian life today, that any difficulty or agitation or governmental failure in one part of the country leads to injurious repercussions in remote parts of the country. But the beneficial and troublesome are two sides of the same coin—that India is much more self-aware as a country, as a single organism; there is awareness

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 37-39.

of the whole in each of the parts which is one of the ingredients that makes for the unity of the whole. Whatever concerns or disturbs one part is quickly transmitted to other parts and sets up sympathetic vibrations. This accounts for a phenomenon which is equally to be seen in the Congress and the country and in both contributes to structural unity. There are counter-vailing tensions in both. The Congress Party is no longer held together by the predominant influence of a single man, which is a risky vestry for a country's or a party's unity, however eminent the person might be. The Congress has become a multi-focus party held to a course by the opposing pulls of its various centres of influence. In shifting combinations at the top a group of persons gather in their hands various threads of power which travel down to diverse regions of the country, so that the sensation of a share in ruling the country is more widespread. The political structure thus has a broader base and is correspondingly more stable. Because influence is seen to be more diffuse, one of the political themes of the 'fifties has died a natural death: regions do not complain now as they used to — especially South India did — that one or another has more power in New Delhi than its due.

Whether all the credit for the evolution of the organism should go to Nehru may be disputed by some; so much of it would seem to be a part of the impact which modern communications would have had in any case. But he was undoubtedly the catalyst: no one laboured so hard to open the eyes of each area to what was happening in the rest; this was the effect of the simple and repetitive homilies he incessantly preached, so tiring to the cynical intellectuals who heard them or read about them, but for most Indians their first steps in learning that they had become parts of a big country. As for political parties, no one except Nehru could have nourished them so; he not only resisted the temptation to which so many in other countries fell but offered positive encouragement to all constitutional opposition.

But the problems of the rim did not yield to Nehru. Unable to eliminate them in his life-time, he bequeathed to his successors an explosive harvest of issues in which separatist tendencies are stoked by ethnic differences, as in the case of the tribes and the Dravidian demand for a separatist Tamilnad in

South India, or by religious differences, as in Kashmir, or by the real or imaginary political grievance of a religious minority, as in the case of the demand by a small minority of Sikhs in Punjab for a separate "homeland" (the majority's demand for a Punjabi-speaking State, on par with other linguistic States, has been met and barring some residual problems has ceased to be the trouble it was).

The world has heard much about three fires on the rim. in Kashmir in the north, Punjab in the north-west and Tamilnad in the south. But there have been others. At India's western extremity, in Saurashtra, tribal mobs attacked towns at the edges of their habitation. Their close kin have been in ferment all over Bastar, a large tribal territory in Central India, sprawling over the country's richest mineral belt; in the spring of last year the man they regarded as their king and god was shot by the police in the midst of what the police say were preparations for rebellion. At the eastern extremity, the tenaciously warlike hill tribes, the Nagas, in many ways more civilized than Indians of the plains, have been in proclaimed revolt for more than ten years; nothing short of civil war raged in the area until ways were found under Shastri for bringing about a—so far stable—cease-fire. The Naga's neighbours to the south, another well-organized community, the Mizos, have been in armed revolt for almost two years. Coping with that too has involved the use of the army and the air force.

Nehru's failure in this respect has a poignancy about it. He was sensitive to the aspirations of the minorities, especially if ethnic, and to their desire to preserve their distinctiveness. He almost indulged the ethnic individualities in the Indian mosaic; he was not only himself responsive to their beauty but made the rest of the country aware of it too by the decision he took, surely in a moment of inspiration, to make the folk presence one of the highlights of the national festival of Republic Day. But the problems of the rim did not demand only spurts of aesthetic response but constant and detailed attention so that situations did not get out of hand before he began attending to them. But this is precisely what happened far too often, in Kashmir as well as in the tribal areas. Misgivings were allowed to get hold of Sheikh Abdullah because little was done in time

about the communal agitations; and Abdullah himself was allowed to indulge his whims to the point where the popular anger against him turned also against India. The same thing happened with his successor: the corrupting influence of absolute power gained head while New Delhi once more made itself wholly dependent upon one man in Srinagar. Various forms of autonomy were worked out for the hill-tribes of Assam but allowed to gather dust until they became unacceptable. "Too little, too late" became a familiar phrase during India's own struggle for independence from Britain; it remained familiar even afterwards. These residual problems are no longer a serious threat to India's unity. But much avoidable trouble is still in store.

Much more important, however, than this failure — which, although tragic in human terms, does not endanger India's basic unity as a whole; especially the tribes do not — is Nehru's failure to ensure that India would be ruled by and after him as one single whole, with all its major parts, the States, brought into a harmonious relationship with each other and with the overall national personality. Certainly the country was more ruled as one unit than at any time in its history and more than the Constitution provides for; to the sweepingly unifying powers given to the Centre under the Constitution others were added by the fact that the same party was in power at the Centre and in the States. But not enough use was made of them to evolve operative conventions which would ensure that not only under the stress of emergency but in normal times also the states would not pursue their diverse interests in a manner injurious to the national interest. This failure shot up to the surface in times of food scarcity because States which were surplus in food refused to make their surplus available to the deficit States. Evolving these conventions was probably the greatest task for Nehru once the survival of the country as a single piece had been assured. No test of his leadership is more crucial, none so clearly confirms the suspicion that perhaps his aversion to schisms became in the long run an invitation to divisions.

One of the instruments of unification which Nehru developed worked very well, and the credit for it is due not merely to his times but directly to him. Because of planning, which he

prompted much more than anyone else, the States look up to the centre for financial approval and help much more than the letter of the Constitution provides for. If a State chose to curb its economic ambitions and to live within the means allotted to it by the Constitution, it could cock a snook at the centre in all sorts of ways. Why it does so a lot less than it could is because people have made economic ambitions inescapable, and for meeting them in however small a degree, the States have to run to the Centre, which in turn has made the approval of the Planning Commission a condition for most expenses which the State, cannot meet out of the revenues allotted to them by the Constitution.

In addition to these revenues, the States get grants-in-aid from another source, which has constitutional sanction; under the recommendations of a Finance Commission, a statutory body is set up by the Union President every five years. These recommendations are virtually mandatory upon the Central Government and the Planning Commission has nothing to do with them. But their quantitative significance has steadily grown weaker as the ambit of the Planning Commission has expanded; what the planners give as loans or as capital assistance is outside the purview of the Finance Commission and is virtually given at the planners' discretion. Both the size and significance of this aid have grown with the size and significance of Central and State plans. Firstly, development expenditure, which is in the partonage of the Planning Commission, not the Finance Commission, has grown enormously from the time of the Second Plan onwards and forms much the more vote-catching part of State budgets.

Secondly, much of this money is given as "tied aid" (tying of foreign aid however is resented by India!), tied to particular activities or projects in States. So penetrating is the influence of this aid (once again the analogy of foreign aid leaps to the mind) that many commentators have complained that the autonomy granted to the States under the Constitution is being undermined. One of the best known among them, D. R. Gadgil,<sup>1</sup> complains: "Most State Governments are tempted by offers of grants to undertake the activities to which the grants are

<sup>1</sup> Now Chairman of the Planning Commission himself.

attached and in the form in which the centrally framed scheme is presented . . . the administration of grants, with the usual examinations as to the admissibility of expenditure, etc. places very considerable power, often unfairly used, in the hands of inspecting officers of the ministries and the Planning Commission. The total result is the undermining of the initiative of State authorities and the building up of feelings of resentment." More sharply expressing the same point of view, another well-known analyst who was himself a Union Minister once, K. Santhanam, says that directly on its own or through aid extended to the States by the Planning Commission, the Centre has spent more on State than Central subjects since the start of the Second Plan. He adds that the Planning Commission has taken advantage—undue advantage, he says by implication—of its vast financial patronage and of the fact that the same political party is in power in all States. Thus it has "virtually proceeded as though the Constitution were not federal in character (and) has assumed a uniformity of policy all over the country sometimes in disregard of vast variation in local conditions."

The excesses of the Planning Commission were to lead to complications: local variations refused to submit to uniform policies conceived in the abstract, and the States in their resentment often refused to render unto the Centre what was the Centre's. But the general plea on behalf of the autonomy of States was more pleasing to the purists' regard for the Constitution than to those who like to see the country's economy unified and the Constitution generate centripetal instead of centrifugal tendencies. That this is what has been happening in fact is sometimes forgotten by those who, more impressed by the event than by the trend behind it, by individual eruptions of the centrifugal forces than by the tendency which has been developing over the years, assume that the greater political reality of India is the ability of the States to take the economic or political bit between their teeth and run away with the Centre. This is not the case in fact. The extent and depth of the reach of the Centre is much greater now than it has ever been. States' pleaders, from the Chief Ministers downwards have to inhabit New Delhi so much that most States have found it cheaper to build huge guest houses of their own,

mostly known as Bhavans, than to hire rooms in the capital's hotels. The proliferation of these buildings in the past five or six years is not a meaningless symbol, though perhaps it is only a coincidence that so many of them are located in New Delhi's Diplomatic Enclave, an area specially created for foreign embassies'.

But in spite of the impact of planning upon unity the net balance of the Nehru era is on the side of disappointment. A great deal more was possible than was done, and what was left undone created its own chain reaction, the burden of which lies heavy upon his daughter. Nehru had the advantage—largely of his own making, though—which his successors do not have now and probably will never regain; that with negligible exceptions his own party was in power in all the States as well. This gave him a channel of access to the States which supplemented his official reach as Prime Minister; whatever States' Governments could not be directed to accept they could, at least sometimes, be persuaded to through the channels of the party. But only fitful use was made of this channel for fear that it might not stand the strain.

In fact, because he could not, as party leader, discipline the State parties, he did not, as Prime Minister, expose the State Governments to the full powers which the Centre has under the Constitution. Instead of the party link giving strength to the Centre-State links which the Constitution has built, it made them weaker. This was shown up to deadly disadvantage in his hesitations in evolving an all-India food policy. His fear was imaginary. If he had dug his toes in he would have achieved that for which India had accepted partition: to bring the country under the unified rule of a strong Central Government. Some might have complained but more would have praised him. The result would not have been less autonomy for the States where they could make use of it, but more power for the Centre to ensure the subordination of local interests to national. Notwithstanding the fissures in the Congress or the parochialism of the State branches of the Congress, he could have made the Centre's authority deeper and broader, freeing it from the uncertainties which would ensue after him or when the party lost its omnipresence. Not only was this omnipresence not used as much as it could have been while it lasted, the



weaknesses of the Congress were allowed to make the Constitution weaker.

Far from creating new apparatus to replace the links which would snap when the Congress ceased to be in power everywhere Nehru did not even use the apparatus that existed. Parliament has provided for a middle tier of authority, half way between the Central and State Governments and specifically intended for checking excessive parochialism, by grouping neighbouring States into five regional zones, each with its own Zonal Council. The mechanism, though simple, was not without promise; but the Councils died of neglect in their childhood. A great deal was expected of them when they were formed; that by example and precedent their power would grow, that with such an eminent Home Minister as Govind Vallabh Pant—the Union Home Minister is permanent Chairman of the Councils—they would become agencies of supra-State authority, that under their aegis, multi-State utilities would grow and help the State's development to become regional in scope. Special targets of hope were river basin development, power and inter-State transport.

Very little came to pass, however; even the one good example of the ambitious planning of a basin that India could boast of, the DVC, modelled in some ways upon the TVA, was caught in disputes between neighbouring States and it died. Far more durable on the other hand, those impediments proved which regional and State rivalries put in the path of economic development. In exploiting the oil resources in north-eastern India and water resources in South India, well-conceived projects had to be twisted out of shape in order to satisfy the rival claims of neighbouring States.

Nehru could not have done what China did. "Both China and India have to contend against provincialism", he remarked in 1952, and then added with a touch of envy "Generally speaking, the Chinese have tried to get over it by getting rid of the provisions themselves". Local loyalties have always been too strong in India for a democratic government to do away with States. But he could have greatly reduced the interference of these loyalties with his own desire to see the country developed and administered broadly as one unit. Instead of trying harder to succeed in that he was to make a series of mistakes in the

next four or five years which were to aggravate regionalism by giving it avoidable provocation, by inflaming it instead of assimilating it peacefully.

The Councils, it is said, died because they were born under the evil star of linguistic States—they were created by the same parliamentary decision by which India's map was redrawn on the lines of language. This, however, transfers to linguistic States the blame which, in fact, belongs to the hesitations and clumsiness with which they were created, and to the suspicion which followed that India's dismemberment was just round the corner. Nothing has turned out to be a more wrong-headed myth than that any one who demands a linguistic State for his language is somehow by that much lacking in loyalty to India. The Congress offered ineffective, unnecessary and unexplained resistance to the creation of Andhra, to which it had committed itself even before independence. From then on until the last logical state in this series, Punjabi suba, was conceded in 1966, the Congress and because of it the Government in New Delhi fought an unavailing rearguard action against every State on the way, yielding at each stage only to protest and violence, injecting far-reaching distemper into what could have been a smooth and on the whole desirable transition from the accidents of history and the product of convenience which many States were before independence to something more logically based upon well-defined affinities.

The worst single example of vacillation by Nehru was over the creation of the unilingual States of Maharashtra and Gujarat in place of Bombay. It not only cost him the best Finance Minister he ever had, Sir C. D. Deshmukh, who resigned because (among other reasons) Nehru refused to make Maharashtra a state; not only cost India's best administered state a great deal of anguish and shame as popular protest took a toll of life both in Maharashtra and Gujarat, but also gave the opposition parties their first strong taste of success as they came together in both states on this single issue and delivered the Congress the biggest blow it had suffered till then. Yet Maharashtra and Gujarat are the best proof that there was no taint of secessionism in the linguistic states' movement; whoever may be considered doubtful in his loyalty to India, neither Maharashtra nor Gujarat ever is.

To give the doubters their due, the fear was legitimate that a state and its people would become more conscious of their distinctiveness if the State's boundaries coincided with the deep-seated distinctions of language and culture. It would strengthen the state's resistance to a distant Central Government which would necessarily be compounded out of areas with different languages and cultures. Differences with a neighbouring State, whose personality would be similarly accentuated, would acquire a sharper edge. A state like Assam, for example, can much more evocatively say "Assam is being bled for the sake of Bengal" when Assam and Bengal are both linguistic States, each with undertones of being "a people", than it could if both were multi-lingual; this happened when a centrally sponsored oil project was shifted from Assam to Bengal. But by its own decisions and pronouncements the Congress had released the force of language into the mainstream of politics; its anxiety now should not have been to thwart it but to harness it to good purposes which linguistic reorganization is indeed capable of serving.

State Governments can reach down to the people only through their own language, which makes unilingual states an advantage, not a handicap. For the people on their side, this demand was only a modern and secular extension of what had begun some centuries earlier<sup>1</sup> and all over the country as the uprising of more direct and simplified religious faiths against the elaborate hierarchy of Hindu churchdom, dominated by a priesthood which was a country-wide elite of a Sanskrit-speaking brotherhood. In those days the people used the "vulgar languages", as the elite used to call them, for new scriptures which gave them direct communion with their gods; now they were using the same vehicle for communion with a much nearer seat of power by overthrowing the new priesthood, the all-India administrative elite and the language of its rituals, English. Just as yesterday's priests had used their exclusive mastery of Sanskrit as their way of keeping the mysteries of religion to themselves, passing on only such crumbs as in their wisdom they thought safe, the new priesthood was using English—and the people were again in revolt

<sup>1</sup> See Selig Harrison's—"The Most Dangerous Decades".

for identical reasons. This is the substance of the complaint often heard that those who wish to keep English as the only language of government have a vested interest in it; they have the jobs and they want to keep them. These aspirations, and the links which develop between a government and the people in a homogeneous language area were assets which should have been exploited.

Nehru and his government made the double mistake, instead, of resisting what they should not have resisted and not sublimating what they could have. Thirty years ago, in a letter quoted by Brecher,<sup>1</sup> Nehru said: "An attempt should be made to unify the scripts of all north Indian languages deriving from Sanskrit and using the Devnagri script. Similarly, an effort should be made to approximate Devnagri to the scripts of the four southern languages—Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam; if this were not feasible, a composite script for the southern languages should be devised. Thus there would be two scripts, one in the north and one in the south. Basic Hindustani, a complete language of about one thousand words, should be developed as an aid to mass education".

Nothing of the kind was done. No common script was developed, formulae devised after a great deal of discussion to make the language of each region a little better known in the rest were neglected, and the curtain of language between different regions remained as thick as ever. A survey made in the middle sixties showed that more than half the books published in India were still written in English, and that less than 7 per cent Indians knew any language other than their mother tongue. The worst to suffer in this jungle of controversies as might have been expected were minority language groups which the dominant regional language tried to swallow up. A great part of the tribal unrest in Assam has resulted from just such jingoism. Themselves in rebellion against the stronger cultural influence of Bengali, the leaders of Assamese tried to impose it upon the hill tribes, which have languages of their own. Thus linguistic aggravation was added to ethnic tensions which from the middle fifties onwards have been adding to the difficulties, already great, of assimilating the rim areas in

<sup>1</sup> Nehru: *A Political Biography*.

the north-east.

The present state of the Congress Party, which can claim not much more now than that it has survived, is an even better example of Nehru's inability to respond to changing problems in time, to stop the drift of events with a few well-placed decisions. That he was right up to a point in not taking too drastic decisions too often is amply proved by the immense fact that of all the countries which became free in the 'forties' and 'fifties' India alone is still ruled by the party which fought for her independence, giving her a unique distinction for continuity. That he was wrong beyond that point is equally well proved by the fact that the Congress is no longer a party but a pervasive sickness.

Less than three months before his death Gandhi wrote, when he was distressed by "the ungainly skrimish for power" in the Congress, that "I am convinced that no patchwork treatment can cure the Congress. It will only prolong the agony. The best thing for the Congress would be that it should dissolve itself before the rot sets in further. Its voluntary liquidation will brace up and purify the political climate. But I can see that I can carry nobody with me in this".

It is fortunate for India that he could not, because the Congress still had its second most important function to perform: after the first, winning independence, was over it had to hold the new country together long enough for staying together to become a habit; no party or other force was visible at the time which could carry out this function half as well. Until this duty had been done the Congress was also justified in shirking any clear definition of its policies and methods. Definitions are by their nature divisive; they exclude, whereas the Congress needed at that time to be inclusive, to bring and keep as many different elements together on the same platform as possible, even if that meant a mis-shapen platform. At the height of his power Nehru could not have persuaded the Congress to adopt any philosophy or programme which would be very clear cut or detailed without splitting the Congress into many parties; he was very wise not to try. Apart from anything else, economic interests had not yet sufficiently developed and specialized in the country to justify separate parties or give them the distinctive economic and social foundations which parties need.

So the Congress remained after independence — and up to a point rightly — what for other reasons it had already become before independence, 'a Congress of parties', wedded to no particular policies or philosophy, accommodating within its large and undefined ambit the whole gamut of political and economic attitudes ranging from the Left to far Right. As a consequence it acquired two things which it most needed during two critical phases of its life. Before independence it gave Gandhi the strength of numbers which he needed for his kind of movement of mass civil disobedience. After independence it gave the country the benefit of an umbrella-like leadership beneath which everyone who wished could take shelter without loss of his identity. This proved to be of decisive help in keeping the country together at a time when there was a strong multiple challenge to its unity.

From this character of the Congress and the divisive pulls of the discordant elements which compose it came the Congress habit of functioning through consensus. Since its objectives before independence were few and simple and continued to be so after, the party had room in it for everyone. With simple objectives, achieving consensus was as easy as with such a variegated membership it was essential; the habit of proceeding only by consensus grew from these causes and Congress leaders became experts in making shifts and adjustments to arrive at time-serving compromises at the expense of policy.

It may seem odd to talk of consensus being a habit with the Congress when for so many years one man towered above it so much that he did not have to be particular, and was not, about consulting his colleagues, let alone proceeding only with their consent. But he was himself the meeting point of so many views that his decisions were as much the result of a consensus (within him) as they would have been if he had searched for a compromise externally, among his colleagues. At other levels the search was more clearly visible. This is how Kamaraj was chosen Congress President, by private discussion and agreement between some regional leaders. This in turn is how Kamaraj succeeded in securing the selection of Shastri in 1964 and the election of Indira Gandhi eighteen months later.

Kamaraj was the first Congress President to be chosen from below, not hand-picked by Nehru from above. Nehru's preferences undoubtedly played a part; the party barons, acting on Shastri's advice, dropped candidates who might grate on the tired nerves of the aging leader. But Kamaraj was chosen by the barons, not by Nehru. In a fascinating gathering in a South Indian town which was little noticed at the time, some of the strongest party bosses in eastern, western and southern India met—for some years thereafter they became famous as the "Syndicate"—and decided to back Kamaraj with such a powerful consensus that he was unanimously chosen. This was a remarkable demonstration of the political viability of the party as a conclave.

But still more remarkable—to anticipate events a little—was the selection of Shastri as Prime Minister, a process over which Kamaraj presided. Within a few days, which were singularly free of the kind of turmoil expected by everyone who had conjured with the question "After Nehru, What?", Shastri was chosen by a consensus expertly spun out of divergent elements by Kamaraj. Shastri himself contributed much by being the kind of person he was: he might have had few devoted adherents as the other chief contender, Morarji Desai, had; but he was acceptable to almost everyone and in any contest the second preference support for him would have overwhelmed any lead anyone might have had over him by first preference. But the smoothness of the operation was the contribution of Kamaraj, ably backed by the Syndicate. For the country it was a heartening spectacle that Kamaraj, a south Indian Tamilian leader, was organizing southern, western and eastern regiments of the party to bring about the unanimous election of a north Indian leader and Hindi protagonist as Prime Minister.

Much the same performance was repeated by Kamaraj when Shastri died with tragic suddenness in Russia. There were two differences this time, both giving further evidence of the viability of the conclave. Kamaraj operated not only through a "syndicate" of chieftains but a much larger assembly of the Chief Ministers of several States, representing further diffusion of power as well as widening of its base. Secondly, there was a clear contest this time because Morarji Desai refused to step

down in Indira Gandhi's favour as he had in Shastri's, and the system proved it was able to withstand the shock of an open election once a consensus had been consolidated behind the scenes.

So the fruits of this habit of proceeding by the maximum available consensus are not to be scoffed at. They are a part of the harvest of the decade of Nehru and a very useful part at that. They did more than merely keep the Congress going. They smoothed the transition from one man's rule to the rule of a group, which is what India has had since the death of Nehru in spite of the brief pre-eminence of Shastri in the last three or four months of his life. The party's ability to find a consensus when needed helped India prove that the death of Nehru would not mean a breakdown of the political system. It was never as true as the madly popular witticism of S. K. Patil suggests—"Nothing grows under a banyan tree"—that Nehru's leadership was so barren that it would not leave behind some durable institutions to take his place. It is the strength of the countervailing institutions he created which explains how a political light-weight such as Mrs. Gandhi came to be naturally accepted as Prime Minister; the office has a stature now which supports whoever holds it. Just as the umbrella the Congress held over the country and Nehru over the Congress helped the habits of consensus to grow, similarly the successful search for consensus held an umbrella over political institutions, protecting them from the shocks which followed independence, until they were able to stand on their own.

But somewhere in the latter half of the decade of Nehru, the needs of the country began to change. It did not need a consensus now but leadership, not a general movement in the direction of a few simple and very broad objectives but a comprehensive and carefully worked out policy, and for giving effect to the chosen policy it did not need an all-inclusive, amorphous party which habit had reduced to a flabby, unthinking mass, but a party with a well-defined harness in which there would be room only for those who believed in its programme. What the programme should have been is less important than that there should have been one and the Congress should have lived up to it. Those who did not accept party's policies would have been obliged in that case to



leave and form a party of their own. The unlimited ideological polygamy which the Congress has practised would have ended and the party system given the healthy viability which the parliamentary system requires. But long after the country was mature enough to stand the strain of a drastic remaking of the ruling party, Nehru continued to sacrifice for the sake of party unity—which was itself to become an illusion in his lifetime—his own healthier impulse and the advice of others in favour of a party which would match his intentions, match them not only in resolutions (which the Congress never hesitated to adopt at his behest) but in actions. But Nehru overlooked the need for this change, just as he overlooked the need for adjustments in foreign policy towards the end of the 'fifties. He overlooked it for so long that he lived to see one of the last things Gandhi said became almost a prophecy, that "if the Congress engages in the ungainly skirmish for power, it will find one morning that it is no more".

The Congress has been most guilty of what Gandhi most feared; it has engaged in nothing so much as in skirmishes for power, mostly ungainly. Of course, it is the function of a political party to win power and retain it by the best means it knows, but the Congress has been so shortsighted in its search for the means that it may lose everything it has fought for since independence: principles, unity, the respect of the country and finally perhaps even power. In the first ten years it chose to remain, for the sake of its unity, a party of the most vaguely defined political philosophy. But in the next five it dissolved that unity into factions which, in the declining years of Nehru, lost such principles as they ever had. If the disunity had resulted from a refining of the party's policies, by the departure of those who did not agree, there would have been some compensation: among those remaining there would have been more cohesion, in their policies more clarity, in their rule more power. But factionalism in the Congress is innocent of such possibilities. Factions are formed and dissolved and reshaped again solely in terms of the politics of power groups. This has determined the relations of the Congress with other parties and of its factions with each other.

One should hesitate to generalize about so large and amorphous a body whose most important characteristic is that it is

virtually a cross-section of the country. But this limited generalization may yet be risked: from about the time of the Nagpur resolutions in 1959, the Congress has not extended the frontiers of its socialism; at best it has defended them, and even that more with statements than matching action. On the other hand it has pulled the frontier back on many fronts, however hard it might have tried not to admit having done so. Within four months of dispersing from Nagpur, it formed a coalition government in Orissa with the Ganatantra Parishad, a party largely formed by the former landlords and Princes who had banded together to protect whatever privileges they still possessed. If the decision had been justified as the cynical act it was, to retain power by neutralising a strong challenge, it would have done little harm to the socialist image of the Congress. But a far more cynical attempt was made to justify it by claiming that the G.P. had been practically converted to socialism.

The claim was not only made by the State Congress leaders, whose need for survival might have induced them to redefine socialism somewhat liberally; not only by Morarji Desai who would rather see socialism buried than praised; but by Nehru, the pride of socialist Congressmen, who said the Parishad had accepted the Nagpur resolutions, especially those on joint farming and ceilings on land! Of course, the leader of the Parishad said so too. But when three years later the Parishad merged with the Swatantra Party without either side batting an eye, it became obvious even to those who might have had some doubts about it earlier that someone must have been lying in 1959. The All-India Congress Committee had endorsed the coalition with one vote against, which only shows how wholesale the evasion of truth could be in the Congress.

Since then—although this is another violation of chronology, it would be best to draw into the present discussion an incident which occurred after Nehru's death but is a good illustration of where his practices led—the Congress has given many examples of its readiness to hold the flag of socialism in one hand and with the other open the door for the most conservative elements of the Swatantra Party to come in. But in the spring and summer of 1966 it excelled itself. Kamaraj raised not the slightest whisper that the public could hear—his assent was a great deal more than implicit—to the admission of

large contingent of Swatantra Party stalwarts into the Congress, this time in Bihar, whose leader is a princeling, a big landlord and was until the other day the most inveterate foe of the State Congress. Within a week, however, Kamaraj invited "all those who believe in socialism to join the Congress and strengthen it". He predicted that ultimately there would be only two parties in the country, one believing in socialism and the other in completely free enterprise, and therefore he found fault with "unholy" alliances between Communists and the Swatantra Party. How he squared this with what his own party had just done in Bihar he did not explain.

There is an explanation of course, but it is one which the Congress rarely chooses to give for such deeds. The princeling, the Raja of Ramgarh, is the most powerful single man in the politics of Bihar, a State which has not been much exposed to modern trends, where old feudal loyalties still hold sway. How much sway he proved in 1952: he personally stood for election to the State Assembly from five constituencies at once and won in four of them. His Party won 11 seats in 1952, 16 in 1957 and 50 in 1962. The Congress then decided it was much safer to take him in. The Raja on the other hand was playing his own game, and rather better than Kamaraj. He had only one reason for joining the Congress—to acquire a larger slice of power for himself, and this time from within the ruling party. At the end of the year he demanded what he wanted: a large share of party nominations for his group in the fourth General Election due in February 1967. He obtained some but not as many as he expected, and in protest he quit the Congress to join an opposition alliance. He left some of his followers inside the Congress but put up many more in opposition to the Congress, and for all his manoeuvring Kamaraj was, as they say, back in square one. All that he got for his labours was a little more blame for the Congress; its socialistic pretensions began to be regarded with still greater cynicism by the voter, and its hold on power did not gain anything from this exercise.

In that sense the ingestion of the Raja of Ramgarh by the Congress and his subsequent departure from it have a significance which goes beyond the affairs of Bihar; like lightning at night they show up how ugly the landscape is. Considering the mass appeal of many of its leaders, it is a curious failing

of the Congress that whenever it has run into electoral competition with what might be broadly called anti-equalitarian interests, whether contemporary-minded capitalists or antiquated, princely, landed or proprietorial interests, it has rarely tried to go over their heads to the people. It is only when they band themselves together, as in the Swatantra Party, that it fights them; otherwise it first tries to win them over anyhow. In the short-term these are legitimate electoral tactics; their long-term effects for the country and Congress are disastrous. They deprive the Congress of political clarity, and enable a dying order to fight another day. And now these effects are catching up.

This is one of the reasons for the rapid decline in the prestige of the Congress and its growing alienation from the white collar classes, the professionals, the intelligentsia, and the lower-most economic strata among the people. If standing by its professions the Congress went down in a State or two, it would be a very good thing for everyone, not least the Congress. This would rehabilitate it in the eyes of the people, check the present erosion of political institutions because of the cynical behaviour of most parties, clarify and consolidate the choices before the electorate and promote a healthy party system. Far from losing in the long run, the Congress by facing this risk would improve its standing at the level where the numbers are. In 1952 the Congress could not have taken the risk; in 1962 it could have but did not; in 1967 it proved not only as timid as in Nehru's lifetime but twice as cynical, with consequences which may soon overwhelm it. Some of them burst upon Mrs. Gandhi when she became Prime Minister; they are the theme of the final chapter of this book.

## PLANNING WITH TEARS

IN THE minds of most people outside India and of many within, Nehru's views about planning were wholly wrapped up in socialism. But as seen in retrospect the effect of his policies was altogether different; during his stewardship socialism made far less headway than indices of production. The economy certainly expanded, and at a more creditable pace than many Indians, overtaken by gloom, are willing to believe. But whether it grew into a socialist pattern is highly debatable. Far more true would it be to say that if higher indices were the aim of planning much of the rhetoric of socialism should have been dispensed with; it succeeded in creating more confusion than socialism. But if the objective indeed was what was stated in its numerous ideological definitions, then the record is unflattering.

In the years of planning over which Nehru presided, output of coal increased 100 per cent, from 32.8 million tons in 1950 to 66.3 million tons at the time of his death in the middle of 1964. Iron ore output increased nearly five-fold, from 3 million to just under 15 million tons, finished steel production from just over a million tons to 4.30 million tons, aluminium from 4,000 tons to 54,000 tons, machine tools from \$ 600,000 worth to more than \$ 40 million worth, automobiles from 16,500 units to 56,700, bicycles from just under a 100,000 to 1,200,000, super-phosphates from 9,000 tons to 108,000 tons and power generation from 5.3 billion Kwh to 25.9 billion Kwh. Although a great deal was to be heard soon after Nehru's death about food shortage in India, a US AID mission study showed that over a 15-year period from 1948 agricultural output increased at 3.1 per cent per annum compounded, keeping slightly ahead of the rise in population at 2.4 per cent. What made production fall behind requirements was that the per capita demand was also rising at 1.36 per cent, making a total rise of 3.6 per cent or a little below the rise in production. According to a survey of the same period by the Associated Chambers of Com-

merce, during the first half of the 'fifties the increase came mainly from increase in acreage but in the second half and after that almost entirely from higher productivity in spite of the fact that during the first half a great deal of land of marginal quality was brought under cultivation.

"Improved techniques", the survey said "are catching on, as confirmed by the record of the first three years of the Third Plan (1961-62 to 1963-64).... Productivity under food crops is seen to be almost 8 per cent higher (than in the first three years of the Second Plan) while cash crops and the all-crop average show a rise of 4 per cent and 7 per cent." Compared with 1951, when planning started, aggregate agricultural output in 1965 was higher by 37 million tons, while over the First and Second Plan periods together it rose by 3.23 per cent compared with 1.59 per cent in Pakistan, 2.01 per cent in Burma, 3.92 per cent in Thailand, and 3.90 per cent in the Philippines. "When the Second Plan ended in 1961, aggregate agricultural output had risen by 20 per cent above the level at its start. The encouraging aspect was that three-quarters of the increase came from higher productivity and the balance from expansion of acreage, the exact reverse of what happened in the First Plan." Investment in agriculture was stepped up by 92 per cent in the Third Plan over the Second. If dependence upon food imports rose further in the Third Plan it is not because performance declined but because a succession of bad monsoons culminated in the worst drought of the century.

In spite of the terrible burden placed on the economy by the Chinese attack at the very start of the Third Plan period, industrial production increased by 6.5 per cent in the first year of the Third Plan and 8 per cent in the second year. New industries producing capital goods expanded at well above the average rate of growth for the two-year period: basic metals increased by 25.8 per cent, fertilisers by 25.9 per cent, heavy organic chemicals by 38.7 per cent, heavy inorganic chemicals by 53.5 per cent, industrial machinery by 47 per cent, transport equipment by 21 per cent, electrical machinery by 18.2 per cent and electric generation by 30.6 per cent. The diversion of resources from consumer to basic industries was

to add to the pressure on prices. But one of the primary deficiencies of an underdeveloped economy was being got out of the way, the absence of basic industries.

Just about the time that the insistence upon socialism began to decline in the pronouncements of the Government and the party, India began to receive sizeable, if still not wholly adequate, amount of foreign aid. It increased from 5.8 per cent of the total investment in the first Plan to 21.1 per cent in the second, to approximately 25 per cent in the first four years of the third, that is, until the war between India and Pakistan intervened with its numerous political complications, including suspension of aid. But more important than the quantitative increase was the improved understanding of its role both in the receiving and donating countries, and the qualitative difference it made in certain respects by bringing in foreign managerial and technical skills.

Still more relevant—since 53 per cent of the aid India had utilised till the 1965 pause had come from the United States—was the finding by John Lewis in 1962: "During the past five years the mood of relationship between the Government of India and prospective private investors has undergone a marked shift as both parties have been overtaken by a new sense of urgency. The Government developed keener appreciation of both the foreign exchange and the technical managerial expertise that foreign firms can supply to the development effort. For their part, foreign including American firms woke up to the potentials of the Indian market and not just the distant potentials." How much keener was the government's appreciation was certified by Lindsay to the International Management Conference in New York in 1963: "India has fully implemented the assurance of non-discrimination given by her Prime Minister"; and how much keener the foreign investors' by Sir Norman Kipping, of the Federation of British Industries "Anybody who invests in India is a sucker, but anybody who does not invest in India is a bigger sucker." (He was quoting an anonymous American.)

But how did socialism fare on the "operational voyage?" Since Mrs. Gandhi is under so much criticism today from socialists of various kinds for departing from the policies of her father, it would seem that the Years of Nehru were a shot in

the arm for socialism. But Nehru did not bequeath a bigger illusion to India than that socialism had prospered under him. There were many statements of policy which a socialist could be proud of but signs of matching action were meagre. The cumulative effect of certain of the government's and the party's acts of omission and commission in Nehru's life-time was<sup>1</sup> to identify both with the relatively better off classes in the urban and rural economy. By itself this would have been enough to start alienating those from the Congress who have certainly more numbers if not also more justice on their side. But what added to the sourness of the latter was the fact that many of the new friends of the Congress were people who had kept away from it during the struggle for freedom. Most government schemes to improve agriculture benefited only those farmers whose holdings were above the average size. They alone had the means to buy the new inputs which plans pumped into the village. They alone had the collaterals to offer which the government-sponsored rural credit system, the only alternative to the usurious moneylender, required as a condition for loans, even for development loans. And they alone had the wherewithal—some surplus grain to sell in the market—to benefit from the new turn in prices, which for the past few years has made the terms of trade more favourable for the farmer than for the manufacturer.

But *THEY* alone were not rural India; far from it, though they became the strongest rural ally of the Congress, which only further depressed the political value of development in a mass-based democracy. They upheld—now with the help of the Congress though in spite of it before independence—a rural system in which the top 10 per cent cultivators owned 56 per cent of the total cultivated area, the bottom 50 per cent less than 3 per cent; in which 72 per cent of the 55 million holdings were below the average size of about five and a half acres; in which about 20 per cent of the rural population was either actually or virtually landless and therefore unable to benefit much from development—it encountered development only

<sup>1</sup> The past tense has been used only because these pages describe a period which is over; the economic situation they discuss has not changed much since.





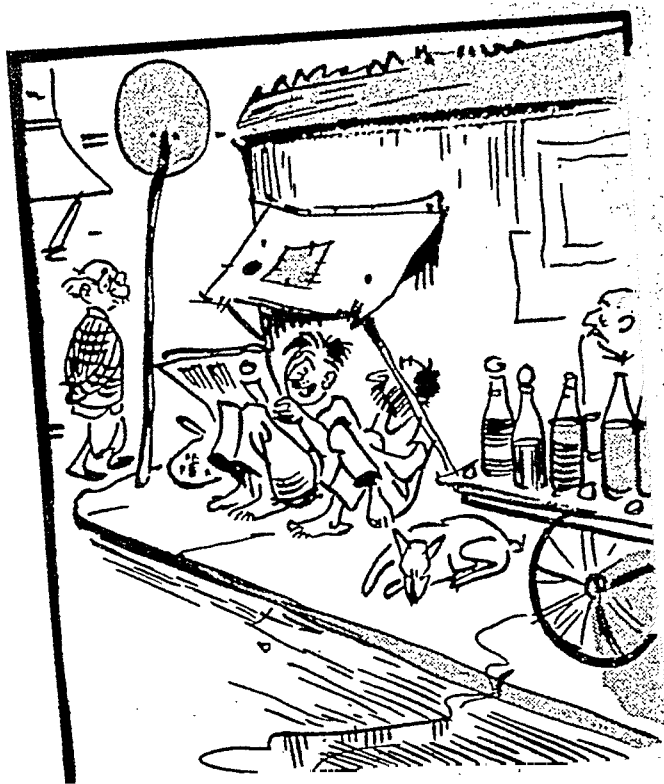
Of Course, People are better off today than before—take me  
for instance, I never used to live like this before!



Certainly we are much off during the Second Plan that we were during the first. For instance we didn't have this building then!



I don't think we can arrest him for adulterating food, Sir,—  
after mixing it with a lot of sawdust he started  
eating it himself!



Ah, soon I can get my family down. It seems they are going to widen this pavement!

when it went to market to buy its necessities and found that because of a variety of reasons connected with development prices were steadily rising. Redemption would have come for the landless and the small farmer if the leadership had shown the will and the ability to bring about structural changes in the rural economy. But in no other field was the leadership's record poorer.

If the Congress had allowed the traditional tenurial system to remain, the landless and the small tenants would still have had the benefit, such as it was, of the contentment of passivity and the traditional obligations which used to bind the landlord, the tenant, the landless labourer and indeed the whole village in a stable system of interdependence. The Congress rightly decided to sweep this system aside because it was feudal; but what was put in its place was worse, an incomplete structure of tenurial "reforms". It gave the landlord all the loopholes he needed to evade the law about ceilings on holdings; so, hardly any surplus land was found by the law for distribution to the landless or those who had only microscopic holdings.

Where there used to be a mutual acceptance of duties, the "reform" created all the tensions of a class war without first giving adequate protection to the tenant. The result was that tenants lost their traditional and customary rights without getting the new rights which the law, which had as many holes in it as a sieve, was supposed to give them. In very large numbers they were evicted or reduced to the status of landless and rightless labour by landlords who did not wish to take the risk that the tenants might involve them in litigation by asserting what they believed to be their new legal rights. Where the danger of such assertion was great and submissive tenants were scarce, land just went out of cultivation: the landlord himself did not have the means or the inclination to cultivate it, and would not call in tenants to cultivate it for him as he used to, because of the fear of litigation.

Such rules as the law had for ensuring compliance were not difficult to subvert in the situation which existed in most Indian villages: the local administration was on the side of the landlord rather than the tenants or the labourers because of his influence, or his economic or social—including caste—connections with officialdom. This enabled the landlord to corner the

benefits of development when they reached the village, thus completing the vicious circle. One of the best known studies of the rural scene, by Ledejinsky, came up with the astonishing finding in 1958 that in two sample villages which he studied for the impact of community development, "nearly 70% of the benefits of the programme went to the elite group and to the more affluent and influential agriculturists".

The same tragedy of half measures was played out in another field: in making the choice between marketing and credit co-operatives on the one hand and joint farming co-operatives on the other. By including the latter in the Nagpur resolutions, which in fact gave these co-operatives some precedence over the others, the Congress invited such a storm of protest from the middle rungs of the rural economy, which were already feeling their new strength by that time, that the whole idea of co-operatives was blown off its feet, much to the disadvantage of rural economy as a whole. There may be two opinions about whether joint farming is a bit of Communism or not and whether it will raise or lower production. But there are no two opinions that service co-operatives, especially marketing and credit co-operatives, are not only useful but, in Indian conditions of fragmented farming, essential. Yet in its retreat in the face of the storm raised by the former, the Congress neglected the latter as well, although it amended its constitution in 1957 specifically to redefine its goal as a "socialist cooperative commonwealth of India". Neither the government nor the party did very much to encourage genuine service co-operatives to come up; in the meantime the field was occupied by a large number of spurious ones, which brought the whole idea into further disgrace. The small farmers, who needed co-operatives most, were not able to get anywhere near them.

The leadership's record in the urban economy was not much better in terms of the regulation of the tendencies which it said it was anxious to regulate. Whether the cause was ideological double-think or nothing more sinister than faulty judgment, the planning apparatus paid little attention to the price factor: even the theory of the first two plans did not say much about prices; in the third they were neglected in practice, or rather by the time the authorities became serious about it, prices had acquired almost a will of their own. After an inexcusable



spending spree during the Second Plan period, which no one seems to have had the desire to control though government had all the regulatory power it needed—most valuable reserves of foreign exchange were squandered on dispensable luxuries—the government woke up to its dire straits and imposed strict control on all imports. Few people disputed that the control was essential. But nothing was done to counter the effect this was bound to have on domestic prices—of the imported goods first and of everything else as a consequence—in a market in which money was being pumped in by deficit financing and production hampered by a whole web of licences and permits which might have been essential and well-conceived but was awfully dilatory and sometimes arbitrary.

There was no cooperative marketing of produce directly to the consumer, and since there was no check on rising prices either, the middleman dipped his hand in the fat and the worst forms of profiteering flourished. Where there was some price control its evasion was easy and the profiteer only turned a blackmarketer. Vast sums of "black money" were accumulated which are still a burden on the economy. There were no physical curbs on consumption, so that unequal distribution only added to the scarcities and simultaneously pushed up distress and prices. The purveyor of goods and the quick-buck investor milked the economy to the detriment of everyone else especially at the expense of genuine investment and industry. As price-burnt through the peoples' savings, any chance there might have been of broad-based investment by the public went up in smoke.

A specific rural extension of this failure was the tardy start made with schemes which would cushion the small farmer against distress sales to the traditional money-lender-trader at low prices immediately after the harvest, or would protect the urban consumer against the high prices the trade charges in the lean months. This gave the grain trade unlimited freedom to fleece both the producer and consumer, with an upward effect on prices which reverberated throughout the economy. Correspondingly, there was a specific urban extension also which directly affected the more organized industry, exposing it to the same ailment of half-measures from which the rural economy suffered. Much of private enterprise in India has an excellent



record of enterprise in the best sense of the word; the unscrupulous opportunist has flourished only since the Second World War. Given support and scope, and freedom from the nagging and negative regulation which defeats social purpose instead of promoting it, private enterprise might have placed the economy on a much better footing. No genuine socialism might have delivered the goods unless the government had not only held slogan-lit banners in its hands but sufficient and effective levers of economic power. But this "mixed economy" without price regulation gave certain entrenched benefits to free enterprise without affording it scope to give the economy a push.

Free enterprise was freed in India of the responsibility, which it has had to shoulder in all non-Communist countries, of building the infra-structure of the economy, the research apparatus and most of the low-profit basic industries out of its own resources; the public sector made these its own almost exclusive responsibility, which partly accounts for its low profitability. As a result, the private sector was able to concentrate largely on the high-profit, ready-market consumer goods industry, the very sector where the pinch of high prices is most felt by the bulk of the population. The public sector thus had much of the responsibility with little of the profitability which it has in Communist countries, and little influence upon the turbulence which price rise caused in the economy as a whole.

It may be open to doubt whether "mixed economy" was responsible for the further concentration of economic wealth in fewer hands during the Nehru decade. But that the concentration did increase is not debatable. According to an unofficial survey at the start of the third Plan, family empires which were already quite large (by Indian standards they were the "giants") expanded still further. At the beginning of the 'sixties it was found that business houses owned and run by five well-known families,—the Tatas, the Birlas, the Mafatlals, the Walehands and the Mahindras—controlled 444 companies through sole or majority ownership and 95 more through a minority share; the first two families alone had a hand in 471 companies. By and large these have been, by Indian standards, progressive and efficient business houses; the first one probably by the best standards anywhere. The first two have also been the

founders and remain the principal support of some of the best known public trusts for charity and social benefit. None of them have any of the taint of undesirable practices which lately has attached to a deplorably large number of high points in the private sector, including many which do not deserve it. But the increasing concentration of wealth remained a fact of Indian life in spite of the "socialism" practised by successive governments under Nehru. Whether such concentration is good or bad is not the point; there are those who argue that this is an unavoidable part of the only economic system which can give industrial growth a push. But it does not add up to socialism and inflates public resentment against the experiment of democratic planning.

Against the background of India's multifarious pulls and tensions no democratic government can draw up ruthlessly consistent and clear-cut plans; it has to proceed by diluting the desirable with the acceptable. Its plans have to be, as India's have been fuggy in the outline, full of loose ends and unnecessary knots. Loss of time, urgency and resources have to be accepted as the price exacted by democracy. But India's misfortune under Nehru was that the most serious shortcomings in planning concepts and implementation did not come from democracy but the failure of the Congress to practise democracy in full. The consequences were as inimical to democracy as to economic development. It is because of them, not the ballot-box, that democracy and democratic planning are not as secure today as they could have been. In fact, if the logic of democracy were to prevail more completely than it does, the planning process would be stronger in India, not weaker.

By about the middle of the decade of Nehru, democracy had done for India what the first plan had demanded of it. It had created a broad area of agreement about the means and ends of economic planning. By the time the Second Plan was adopted and the second general elections held there were very few people who would have disputed that in the midst of the welter of India's divergencies and inequalities there should be somewhere a single peak where someone sits to take a comprehensive view of the economy as a whole; that from such a view an arrangement of priorities should follow both as regards resources and investments, that for the priorities to have some

sanction behind them, the viewer should be in close association with the government; that in arranging and implementing these priorities, however, not only the government and its agencies should have a role but also numerous other associations of people who have a stake in seeing how the economy shapes; that the economy should increasingly become a more organic whole of inter-related parts in which the parts should have adequate autonomy of operation but none should be outside the pale, as a great deal of agriculture is today; that the net direction must be a steady rise in the living standards of the people whether the motive in raising them be an equalitarian philosophy or the search for markets or political stability; that in reaching these goals India should take help from whichever quarter it comes but should learn to dispense with it as soon as possible, accepting in the meantime only the minimum possible limitation upon her domestic or international economic or political choices. None of this would be opposed even by the Swatantra Party, from which most of the opposition to planning comes, or by the Communists, who are most opposed to American aid and the scope allowed to the private sector.

A somewhat smaller proportion of people but still the great majority would have added a few more ingredients to this formula although their motives might not be identical. Some would have been moved by what they believed to be socialism, some by love of the power this would give them, some by a hard-headed economic appraisal. But they would have given pre-eminence to public control of the economy; withheld unregulated freedom from private enterprise; given a larger share of marketing and trade to cooperatives of producers and consumers; given the economy an industrial slant while reviving agriculture through structural changes, especially those which would improve the small farmers' lot; create more jobs but also raise the economy to a higher level of technology (the latter was probably a minority view before the Second Plan period).

It was as true at the end of the Nehru era as it was when Nehru was at the peak—and it remains true today—that this aggregate of objectives had greater support in the country than any drastically different aggregate or one substantially to the

Right or Left of this. Any policy which did not cross the limits of this area would have had the willing consent of the great majority of the people, which is all the sanction that democratic planning requires. And if the government had fully exploited this area it would have succeeded in a great many things which would have made democracy and the economy much stronger, thus ensuring the success of democratic planning. But if the government failed to take advantage of the sanctions the fault was not democracy's or of the magnitude of India's economic problems. Certain characteristics of the Congress and of its leadership were to blame.

If India's political and economic evolution during the 'fifties took much of its strength from Nehru—from his vision, his passionate desire to see India become a modern and progressive country, his hold on the people, his ability to persuade them to wait in patience while with their sacrifices he built a better future for the country—it also took most of its weaknesses from him: his inability to see the ground at his feet; his impatience, because of which he took many wasteful leaps into the future where there was nothing yet to sustain him, turning a little of the mud into marble without trying first to turn enough of it into brick: his general inability to match the tool to the task; and most grievous of all, in spite of his hold on the people, his failure to derive from them the power which they were not only willing but eager to impart to his elbow. They would have been willing not only to wait but work, if only he would create the right harness for their energies, and if only his government and his party would at least begin to live up to his professions.

No other Indian leader had the ability that Nehru had of making big and dramatic projects possible, but he allowed this ability to run away with him and with the planning process over which he presided. Both seemed to avert their gaze compulsively from the humbler tasks which lay around their feet, which were as essential and urgent as the building of nuclear plants and automobile factories, and which, if not so callously neglected, would have given the mass of the people the faith that something was being done for *them*, not for some distant classes and places.

Dams were built, and proudly displayed to a handful few,

especially VIPs from abroad; but in plains barely visible from these heights very little was done to train the farmer in the uses of irrigation, or the government's machinery in the methods needed for ensuring that water is released at the right time and in the right quantities—India's record in using newly harnessed water is among the worst in the world. While prestigious new irrigation works were built the renewal and maintenance of the old was neglected, though these at very little cost could have made "development" a local reality, not glamorously as a brand new steel plant would but sufficiently to give stability to people's trust in the system. Large fertilizer factories were built but the soil neglected: the country has lost more through erosion and waterlogging than it has gained through new works. Little thought and less effort was invested in applying the daily wastes of the village to the surrounding fields. Better storage of grain was almost wholly neglected, though that by itself would have made India self-sufficient—almost as much food is eaten up by rats alone as India imports in a normal year. But such repairing of leaks—and there are hundreds in India's economy—by mobilising the help of the people, especially their physical energy, did not attract Nehru's and therefore the planners' attention, as building new and monumental works did.

One of the mysteries of the experiment in democratic planning in the Nehru era—the mystery has continued since his death—was the growing divergence between the pronouncements of the Congress and the actual results. People have not been slow to give the explanation which most readily comes to mind when the handiwork of politicians is under discussion: that what is said is not always what is meant, or in one word, dishonesty. But that is probably too ready an answer; the truer one is a little more complicated. In large-scale ventures like developing a whole nation, the tools of a policy have a dynamic of their own which can turn out to be stronger than the policy itself. The wrong tool may not only just fail in the task but change the nature of the task and reach ends which were not intended. This is what seems to have happened to the Congress. It was probably sincere, and certainly Nehru was, in proclaiming the goal of a socialist pattern. It was also aware that the people must be the vehicle for taking the

country to that goal; the machinery of the government and commissions for planning would not be enough by themselves. That is why in all its public thinking, and especially in Nehru's, public cooperation was a very conspicuous theme.

But because of certain failings it did little to forge this tool; it turned instead to what was at hand, the normal machinery of the government apparatus, and lived unhappily ever after. For an experiment so utterly bold and novel that it was hailed by the world, the democratic transformation of a multitudinous nation, it chose a tool as old as the mandarinat, which had been tied flat to the book of rules by a century and more of colonial administration. To such a tool was entrusted the task of creating a social revolution, which required that each day be lived like an adventure, that all rules should bend to the creative innovation. This tool did the task in the only way it could—not by producing a social revolution but a mountain of regulations. The fault was not the tool's but of those who chose it, whether they knew it or not that the result would be very different from what they intended. The tool did the task by deflating it first, which means that it failed to do it at all.

Bureaucracies the world over suffer from two defects. One is their mistrust of the expert, the specialist, whom they always subordinate to the generalist, the pure administrator, the civil servant, the man who is normally moved by the same reflexes and rules whether he functions as the revenue collector in a district or as secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Trade or chairman of a steel corporation. The second is the bureaucrat's aloofness from the people in the mass; their fate may depend upon his decisions, but by and large he remains a stranger to them.

In the Indian bureaucrat both defects have been sharply accentuated by the traditions inherited from the days of British rule. The Englishman's mistrust of the expert and the specialist has reinforced the bureaucrat's, and perhaps it is stronger in India today than in Britain because the Indian bureaucrat has been less exposed to contemporary trends in the methods of governance. Alienation from the people became especially marked in the Indian civil servant during a period of half a century or more when he was the instrument of a foreign rule in a country which was becoming more aggressively nationalistic

day by day.

Both these defects shot up to the surface as soon as India's experiment in democratic socialist planning got under way. Socialism in India has largely meant statism—the State as such has taken over, not just regulated but directly operated, a large number of expensive and complex industrial undertakings which collectively constitute the public sector. It has also extended its slow-moving and regulation-bound controls into a very large area of the private sector economy, especially industrial. This has been the sum and substance of Indian socialism in the more organized area of the economy, and its operational instrument is the ubiquitous civil servant, whose inadequacies have been mercilessly shown up by his mishandling of these new, unfamiliar and rapidly growing responsibilities. Perhaps his performance would have been better—and thus socialism might have had something better to show for itself—if he had been more willing to profit from the knowledge and expertise of the lesser people who live beyond the pale of bureaucracy; or else he might have profited from mistakes if his functioning had been less inhibited by caution. But as it turned out, his inadequacies made him more cautious and too much caution made him still more inadequate, each making the record of Indian socialism (read statism) totally uninspiring.

A few examples should suffice to show how the decisions and non-decisions of the economic ministries which he runs have interfered with industrial development and cost the country valuable foreign exchange. Pheroze B. Medhora, whom I have quoted earlier, has shown how "the growth of final-product industries (rayon spinning, automobile assembly, machinery manufacture) has progressed more rapidly than intermediate-product industries (chemical pulp, caustic soda, alloy steels) which feed them". In alternating phases this has resulted in large import of intermediate-products to keep the end-product going, and large under-utilization of installed capacity in consumer goods industry whenever cuts in the import of less essential intermediate products have become unavoidable. Further, these cuts "have been generally administrative responses to a worsening foreign exchange situation, and do not

form part of a well-conceived production-stimulating policy". Properly selected and scheduled key imports could help to fill one of the biggest gaps in the economy—"considerable unutilized capacity in industry, one of the main reasons being lack of complementary imports of raw materials and intermediate goods needed by industry"—and Medhora quotes one competent estimate according to which imports of a value of Rs. 100 crores would raise industrial production by several times the value of the increase in imports. A recent study prepared by the U.S. Aid authorities has come to a similar conclusion.

But there has been neither proper selection nor timely action, and of the latter malady, delay, Medhora gives an exceptionally good example. "The U.N. Fertilizer Mission calculated the delay over a project from the planning to the commissioning stage at one year for a 100,000-ton nitrogen fertilizer plant; this represents an output valued at about Rs. 11 crores, or 25% of the present production of nitrogen in India." An instructive contrast is that it took the government precisely ten years to bring to any kind of a conclusion a debate begun in 1956 about the terms on which foreign private investment in the fertilizer industry should be accepted.

But the consequences of excessive reliance upon the machinery of routine administration were far more serious for the rural economy and for the government's plans to give it a push. A well-conceived programme of intensive improvement in agriculture was drawn up for selected areas almost seven years ago. It called for large-scale mobilization of relatively simple and inexpensive inputs, and massive seeding of new methods among cultivators. But the programme was left to the routine administration; that was the best engine the country could find for this crucial impulse-building start for rural transformation. Its results during the first five years were assessed in the spring of 1966 by S.R. Sen, Additional Secretary, Planning Commission. He reported that the biggest obstacle had been "the archaic administrative system" which has proved "woefully inadequate for any operation the aim of which is not to maintain the *status quo* but to change it". The purpose of the programme was to push up growth by bringing about "a basic change in the situation"; of the administrative system



to "ensure security and hence allow only the minimum possible change." The programme put a premium upon the technician as the instrument of change; the administrative system gave primacy to the administrator, "whose function is to lay down and administer rules designed to ensure conformity." Sen found the farmer receptive to change but the programme unable to harness this fact.

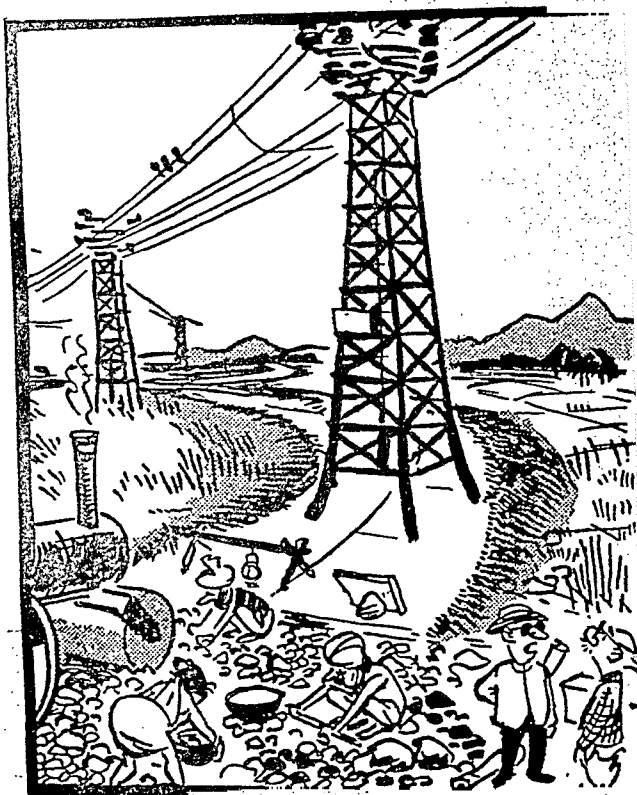
It has been India's pride that under Gandhi's inspirations she has waged a war on untouchability. But the Registrar-General of India reported last year that "nearly 50% of the people in some parts of rural India are not aware of the fact that untouchability is an offence punishable under the law". The reason is obvious: the law has been passed but not propagated the way it would have been if the party or the administration were more active among the people.

It was in three different stages and for three different kinds of reasons that the Congress chose to rely mainly on the administrative machinery it had inherited from the British instead of trying to create a new one for the new task. The first stage came with shattering suddenness, when partition struck its massive blow and the whole country appeared to fall apart. Even at that time there were strong suggestions, from so eminent a person as Gandhi for one, whose instinct in such matters was truer than the trained judgment of Nehru, that the rule by clerks which had been bequeathed by the colonial rulers should be replaced by something else. What this something else should be was not clearly spelt out even by Gandhi. But he wanted the "brown bureaucrats", which he feared Indian civil servants had become, to be replaced by people who were or would be accepted by the people more truly as men of the people themselves. By as much as his westernized upbringing and highly westernized education equipped the Indian bureaucrat to serve purposes which were still controlled from London, by that much they accentuated his alienation from the people. A person of a very different type than he was needed to bridge the gap between the government and the people after independence had been won.

But the government was too beset by unexpected crises to have any time for such innovations. It turned instead to the well-oiled and dependable machinery of the civil service, which



The road is in the Second Plan—there's been a delay in that.  
But I have been asked to go ahead with the Third Plan—  
all these come under it!



I have nothing to do with that. My job is to build roads  
accordingly to the Plan given to me!



Here's a concrete instance of procedural delay—this project  
we are constructing was scrapped at the blue-print  
stage two years ago!



I'm afraid we' have got to deal with this matter straight  
away Sir, we can't shelve it—Ther's absolutely  
no space in the shelf!

not only had men of some ability in it but also great experience in handling just such threats of disruption to the established order of things. Most of them knew, more or less, how to deal with disorder, lawlessness, rebellion—and upon their knowing it survival depended; poverty and social change interested only a few of them. The one novel problem the country had to handle at that time was the absorption of the Princes. But in this it had the masterly guidance of Patel, whose well-ordered mind in any case was not as innovative as Gandhi's whose authoritarian personality was not displeased with bureaucracy; and he had the most efficient assistance of V. P. Menon—the archetype civil servant, methodical, painstaking correct—whose pre-eminent success helped in confirming the decision that the best guide in most situations was the senior civil servant. Sardar Patel gave pithy expression to this when he said in 1949: "I have worked with (senior civil servants) during this difficult period. Remove them and I see nothing but chaos all over the country."

In retrospect this might appear to be a sweeping verdict. But at the time it was impossible not to see its merits. The more obvious one was that a trained civil service immediately got down to jobs which needed urgent doing and which it could do better than any other available system. But more subtly it helped the politician and the bureaucrat to get over an invisible barrier that stood between them. The two had faced each other across the barricades, so to speak, during the struggle for freedom; after independence they had to meet across the table, and in a radically altered equation. Would the transition and the new relationship be smooth? There were many doubts. The minister might take a little time to forget that the official now sitting in front of him, or his occupational cousin, was the man who ordered police attacks, even firing, upon freedom demonstrations. Sometimes the confrontation had the specific piquancy that a minister now had as his administrative aide the very official who had sent him to prison (this was the case with Nehru, among others). The official on his part might have a chip on his shoulder. He had to take orders now from his social inferiors. He was accustomed to working only with people who enjoyed, like himself, dressing for dinner, a drink before and a cigar after. Now he had to accept as his political

superior a man who had never used a necktie, or had only used it round the waist—for holding up his pyjamas.

But Nehru and Patel helped enormously to adjust this equation. Nehru's sophistication could look any official's in the eye. Patel, a barrister once, was a man of very authoritative presence. And they had suffered the bruises of police action as much as any other leader. Therefore, when they began to show such public regard for the civil servant, lesser politicians became less hesitant in showing it. The respect senior officialdom showed for Nehru and Patel—and that was enormous—travelled down by example to lower levels of the hierarchy.

The next stage for choosing between the tested tool of bureaucracy and something more novel came when planning began. The desire was expressed in the first Plan that people's cooperation should be harnessed for planning. A little later, institutions which would harness it began to be developed: Community Development Projects and National Extension Service came first; then the start made in the Second Plan with planning from below; then the Nagpur resolutions on cooperative farming; and then the Panchayati Raj scheme which indeed had revolutionary possibilities. But the people never, in fact, became the vehicle of planning because the preference at the top still was for the more familiar methods, though now for different reasons. Ideas like Panchayati Raj and Community Development were never very close to Nehru's mind, which was more a technocrat's than a village leader's, more an intellectual aristocrat's than a sarvodaya worker's. His imagination was more drawn to the monumental planning of things that could be seen to be technologically daring, not to transformation at the grass roots by the improved performance of centuries-old chores by the mass of the people. His interest in the people's welfare was unquestionable; his compassion for them overwhelming. But he was not very convinced that they could transform the country by looking after the soil a bit better or by digging a little deeper or by using compost more regularly and better or by keeping rats away from their bins. So he stuck once more to what he knew better—the blue-prints and set squares and logarithms of the planner (it is not a coincidence that the two colleagues who influenced him most

as the patron of planning were two people as utterly modern-minded as himself and as little at home in the village, the brilliant statistician, P. C. Mahalanobis, and Krishna Menon, (who knows London better than any part of India). So in this stage also the choice went in favour of economic growth through the bureaucratic elite.

The beginnings of the third stage are so diffuse that it is difficult to date them. But a good guess would be round about 1958, when Nehru felt so disturbed by the rut into which the party and the country—and himself—had fallen that he decided to resign, to be able to take a new look at himself and at the people around him. If he had stuck to the decision and plunged into the country as he said he wanted to—to “have a period when I can free myself from this daily burden and can think of myself as an individual citizen of India and not as Prime Minister.... to fit myself for the great tasks ahead”—he might have come up with answers which would have more room in them for the citizenery. But this did not happen and once more he became an associate of the known and the tried, not the leader of unknown and new forces. Since then there has never been any chance for new departures and novel choices. All decisions have been taken in the framework of the habit-bound thinking, if thinking it may be called, of the civil service and the party, both stuck “in the ruts of thought and action” which Nehru so clearly perceived in 1958 and for once—only once—tried to break out of.

As the tool of socialist planning, the civil service could not have been a more unfortunate choice, whatever its virtues, and there are many, in other respects. “Government officials”, said a very senior one among them S. S. Khera, who has more experience than most of bureaucratic planning “feel very diffident and at times even ashamed” to use the word socialism, which he adds, “is not a dirty word, although in the cloisters of the administration it is often regarded as such. And the few in responsible positions who do refer to the socialist state often tend to be somewhat apologetic, as if it is not the stated policy of the government to work towards a socialist state.”

The inhibiting effect this difficulty has on the thinking and actions of the administration in implementation of policy objectives is not difficult to imagine. It helps to explain why



controls which are largely worked by this agency are not corrected when they begin to produce such unsocialistic results as further concentration of wealth. Stronger reasons than a conservative temperament are given by many people for whatever the civil servant may have contributed to the increased concentration of economic power in the hands of the business community: he is said to be more than willing to be inactive. Until the early sixties, though less a little later, the suspicion was strong that there was active collusion between companies which were more affluent than scrupulous and senior officials who were more ambitious. The power which the latter wielded to grant or withhold the plums of lucrative licences and permits virtually in their discretion was matched by the attractions which the companies could offer in the form of highly paid jobs; against favours granted while in service the senior bureaucrats could have the jobs upon retirement or pass them on to their relations even earlier. Gossip, if not jobbery too, was sufficiently rife in Nehru's declining years for the suggestion to be made by many people seriously, in later years even by President Radhakrishnan, that a convincingly impartial and honest agency should be created, such as a public board, to decide who should get the contracts and licenses and on what conditions. The gossip quite possibly exceeded the facts, but it did create a strong suspicion in the public mind that in addition to the links already existing between the more adventurous people in business and politics, a very private kind of private enterprise was growing up between the seats of administrative and commercial power. From this arose some of the worst scandals of the Nehru era which made socialism something to be laughed out of court.

The inhibitions of the Congress party are of a different nature but are as bad if not even worse. If ground-level institutions were really to work according to the party's professions about them, especially those which are politically orientated, as panchayats, there is no doubt at all that they would throw up a new kind of leadership, very different from the one which has held power for nearly a decade. If genuine cooperatives were to grow, not the trickery that many of them are, they would break up the nexus between the present leadership and its present sources of power in the village, the upper middle class farmer and the

local leader of the rural trading community. Therefore this leadership, while still using the prescribed jargon for the sake of survival, delays through inaction precisely those transformations which would be inimical to its own future though they would revitalise the economy of the village and strengthen the roots of democracy.

*THE SHAPE OF DEMOCRACY*

IF no man's works are easy to judge it is still more difficult to judge a whole people's. That is what makes it dangerous to pass a summary judgment on Indian democracy, which has been shaped by more people than any other political institution. But events so far have at least established that prophecies of doom may be premature, like those about India's unity. The two men who started India on the road to representative government were themselves sceptical about the results: Lord Morley, Secretary of State for India, wrote to Lord Minto nearly sixty years ago; "Not one whit more than you do I think it desirable or possible or even conceivable to adopt English political institutions to the nations who inhabit India." Half a century later Selig Harrison was sure that "the politics of national survival will clearly not conform to Western conceptions of 'democracy' and will almost certainly, at one time or another, appear 'totalitarian' according to the experience or definitions of the West". But when Nehru died, half way between the critical third and the still more critical fourth general elections, each more important than the first and the second, it was possible to assert that instead of doom arriving there had been some progress; and what was true in the middle of 1964, remains true today, subject to the doubts discussed in the final chapter of this book.

Instead of pitting assertions against each other, however, it would be better to see what the record, as seen in retrospect, shows. Does it show that the voter has freedom of choice; or that he is coerced by the government or by the institutions of his society to vote against his wishes? Does he have reasonable choices before him? Do the results of the elections represent the country or are they only a conglomeration of voting accidents? What is the record of the elected representatives? Are Congress MPs only a rubber stamp for the government, the Opposition MPs a disembodied voice, or do they influence the conduct of affairs? Does the net result sustain people's faith

in democracy or does it compel them to look for some desperate remedies? The answers to these questions might be better guides to the future than summary prognostications, however authoritative.

If there is one thing that can be said safely about elections in India, it is that no one stands, even if some try to, between the voter and the ballot-box. Whichever other reputation might have declined with the years, the Elections Commission's has not; it conducts the elections with the same impartiality which was noticed in an earlier chapter about the 1952 contests. But freedom within the polling booth would hardly be enough if there were a lack of it without, and it is there that the finger has been pointed by some people. One complaint is that the Government uses influence; the second that his caste and religion are such compulsions upon the voter that he can hardly be said to have a will of his own. The first complaint mostly comes from the Opposition, the second from psephologists, especially foreign.

The Opposition's complaint appears plausible at first sight. The Government has been held in awe for so many generations that the habit may have endured even after independence. It would seem natural that people should wish to keep on the right side of almighty authority, therefore also of its agent, the local Congressman, and how better to do so than to vote Congress? This complaint has grown with the development programmes of the Government; few people are now out of the reach of their patronage, therefore also out of the influence of the Congress. The Congress and the Government — hardly distinguishable, the Opposition critic chips in — have not only Community Development to help them win friends but also a chain of other village uplift outfits. Organized industry also tries to please the Government; hence it contributes much more, if not only, to the election chests of the Congress. Government's transport and publicity facilities are often commandeered by Congress candidates: in backward areas quite openly, in the more advanced and critical, surreptitiously; in both Government may use its authority for the party.

Myron Weiner, whose field studies are a contribution to an understanding of India, caught a senior Congress leader in Madura grousing "We no longer control patronage. There is an Appoint-

ment Committee in the Corporation. It appoints school teachers, nurses, doctors, clerks and other officers up to a certain grade. There are several hundred such appointments a years. Generally, there is individual favouritism and nepotism, but appointment is not strictly on party lines. Now a few communists are getting jobs, while none was appointed while the Congress was in control. Then there is some discretion with contracts. Under Congress control we gave contracts to best business, but on party lines. But then we got donations from these businessmen. That's how we worked. Now we do not have power, so we cannot do that." He was speaking about the local town committee. But it is reasonable to assume that methods are about the same at the level of the State Government at least, if not at the level of the Union Government also; the stakes are higher and so are "donations".

But all that this proves is intent, not effect; about the latter some other evidence is more relevant. More than half the people have always voted against the Congress in all elections to Parliament and in most to State Legislatures. While planning and its patronage have expanded enormously over the years, the Congress share of the vote has mostly gone down. On the other hand the vote of the organized Opposition parties has been steadily rising: in State elections from 32 per cent in 1952 to 35 per cent in 1957, to 40 per cent in 1962; in parliamentary elections it has been only a little below these rising figures. Wherever Opposition Parties have been able to combine around an issue, they have driven the Congress to the wall: not only in Kerala, which could be said to be a rather a special case, but in Bombay (on the demand for its linguistic bifurcation), the most satisfactorily run State in the whole country. The Congress has suffered some of its most notable defeats in constituencies most assiduously nurtured by it by investing in them more than their due share of development funds.

Gopal Krishna, of the New Delhi Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, suggests in an interesting analysis that there is no reliable correlation between the state of economic development of an area and its attitude to the ruling party. "The Congress is marginally better entrenched in the relatively more developed than in the less developed part of the country." But, the study adds, "the same appears to be the case with the

Communists". In another study, Morris-Jones<sup>1</sup> brings out that at a time when "Community Development was in the process of expanding over the face of India, the Congress did relatively worse in districts where CD had been in force". The inference he suggests is partly correct: "One voted Government to attract the boon and then, having got it with some disillusionment, voted against."

In some of the areas I have watched, the Congress vote has been distinctly lower in districts which have done well under Congress rule, have become economically prosperous and politically active. If the example of these areas suggests anything, the Congress vote falls instead of rising with development, enlightenment, politicalisation. The reason is not only that people learn to recognize Congress methods for what they are and are repelled; but two other things happen as well. First, these are the very areas where the habit vote declines, the habit of voting Congress because it won independence; people begin to worry more about the present and the future. Secondly, new discriminations develop and ways of thinking become diversified. Specialized and clashing interests come with the growth of the economy which an omnibus Congress can no longer satisfy. It is not enough now for the Congress in these areas to be everything to everyone: it has to be something to some people, something else to others. This exposes the Congress to unaccustomed strains and it loses ground.

The facts do not suggest successful arm-twisting or bribery by the Congress (assuming that these are attempted) or that one votes Congress for favours done. What they do suggest is that the voter is free to vote against the Congress and more often than not does. But the Opposition parties are not able to profit from this because they cannot often unite around an issue; divided, they are decimated by the single non-transferable vote, which gives the Congress well above 70 per cent seats in Parliament and above 60 per cent in most State Legislatures on votes which are consistently below 48 per cent and 45 per cent.

In the short-term future the Opposition may not always be able to gain by uniting. Gopal Krishna's analysis shows that

<sup>1</sup> *Government and Politics in India.*

the Congress won 64.20 per cent of the Lok Sabha contests and 55 per cent of the State Assembly contests in which it was opposed by a single Opposition party. But this is a temporary consequence of two factors. First, the Opposition parties have not yet learnt to combine effectively. If the Swatantra Party, for example, decides to leave the field clear for the Jana Sangh contender, more often than not, it simply walks out of the contest instead of working for the Jana Sangh candidate. But as contests become keener the Opposition parties may try more actively to deliver their votes to the agreed Opposition challenger. Secondly, as the indeterminate middle vote splits it scatters, and in the present phase more of it goes to the Congress. The Congress share of the vote thus increases a little, though sometimes its lead over the Opposition declines.<sup>1</sup> The moment the Opposition party, singular or plural, gets close enough to majority to look like a possible winner, all the points in its favour, if it has any, will blossom, eclipsing the advantage which the Congress tries to get out of being the party in power. In all likelihood this will happen soonest in elections which are close to the ground, like the village panchayats and the district councils: thereafter, and in time, the process will travel upwards.<sup>2</sup>

What has been more in the news since the Chinese attack are overt restrictions on individual freedom; in the past year or so they have been a blot upon the Government's record of regard for civil liberties. Most commentaries on Indian institutions are agreed that subject to certain limitations, which are too detailed to be discussed but are commonly held to be reasonable, the individual has had wide freedoms both in theory and practice. Certain abridgements are deplorable, such as preventive detention; though declared to be temporary when they were first imposed, they have since become nearly permanent. But these are not an intolerable evil; the original need for them was understandable—to curb the rebellion in Telengana—and they have not been excessively used: from 11,000 arrests by the end of the rebellion, the number plumated to

<sup>1</sup> See p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> It travelled up considerably and fast in the Fourth General Election in 1967.

325 within three years and was only 100 just before the attack by China. But with this attack a sweeping enlargement of the restrictions came. One of the first casualties was one of the best things about the Constitution, that it not only sets out a comprehensive list of Fundamental Rights but makes the Supreme Court the custodian of their enforcement. Under the emergency the courts cannot be moved, which, in fact, means that the rights themselves are suspended. Sundry other curtailments of well-known freedoms followed, some lifted straight out of war-time practices in Britain. For a time, they could be said to be proportionate to the cause. But as most people see it they have continued well beyond the need.

But in the context of the present discussion a few other things are more important than that unreasonable restrictions are being continued unnecessarily. Public protest against the restrictions has been loud and widespread, throwing the Government completely on the defensive. Despite the stubbornness it had shown earlier, the Government started to yield early in 1966, especially after lawyers and judges had added their voice to the general protest. It gave up the argument it had successfully used till then, that the menace of China had barely abated when Pakistan started a new invasion of Kashmir. I think it would have given up the restrictions themselves in the summer of 1966 if by that time near-rebellion had not simultaneously broken out in scattered parts of the country, especially if the Left Communists had not again erupted into violent subversion of essential services, as they did in West Bengal in the spring.<sup>1</sup>

Even so, in May 1966 the Government announced large-scale relaxation of the emergency provisions and in most parts of the country virtually withdrew them. Still more relevant is it that the restrictions have not impinged upon any form whatsoever of non-violent agitation, even if it is not strictly constitutional. No one has had any reason to fear that his election campaign would attract the emergency powers provided that it did not include either violence or preaching secession, which in many countries would be held treasonable. And if an ounce of evidence is better than a ton of conjecture, there is a ton of the former in the Kerala elections of 1965, which were not only

<sup>1</sup> See the last chapter—*Uncertain India*.



won by the Communists but by the Left faction in it. Once more the question is not of the Government's or the Congress party's intentions; even assuming that these were bad they have not been able to load the dice that rattles in the ballot-box.

Other restraints upon the voter are far more difficult to analyse; they concern the core of Hindu society, where all evidence, for or against, equally becomes a matter of opinion. Take first the claim of Indian democracy that it is secular, a departure from the pattern of politics immediately before independence, when mostly religion decided how a man would vote. The basis of the pattern was the Muslim sense of being different from the surrounding mass of Hindu society; the feeling was not always as sharp as during the 'forties, but it was pervasive and in different forms had lasted through many generations. Extending still further back was the Hindu tradition that the king was not only the temporal head of the state but also defender of the faith, propagating which was part of his duty. Even Akbar did not try to disown his duty to religion; he only tried to synthesise religions. Against this background can the claim be correct that when a Muslim enters the polling booth now, he is not swayed by religion, which has not been a matter of his own mature choice but something he inherited at birth, as a Hindu inherits his caste and all of us our colour? Or can it be contended that a Hindu would vote as readily for a Muslim candidate as he would for a Hindu?

Indian society, it is true, has a tradition of tolerance for which Max Weber could find "no parallel in the West before the most recent age". But the tradition seems not to have extended into politics much; the most recent religious experience of the sub-continent on the other hand is of carnage perpetrated in the name of religion. Even the subsequent secularism was less a matter of philosophic conviction than an expedient for the preservation of India's unity in the midst of the diversity of religions. The laws and the Constitution are undoubtedly secular; they have either not interfered with religion at all, or if they have, as with the social laws of the Hindus, they have only done so to reform Hindu society and remove any impediments in the way of equality between persons. The Congress also swept out the system of separate electorates, imposed by the British and the cause of a great

deal of the communalism which followed. But that by itself did not make Indian politics secular. There were several outbreaks of communal rioting in recent years. There was a serious riot at Aligarh in 1961, and in the same year, during troubles in Jubbulpur, there were some shocking cases of the indifference of local officialdom to the destruction wrought by religious fanaticism. Each time a new batch of Hindus is beaten out of Pakistan their journey through India becomes a trail of rash and secularism is disturbed again before it can become a widely shared sentiment.

Stronger still are the doubts which democracy invites because it has given shelter to the institution of caste, in some ways even strengthened it, just when caste distinctions were beginning to yield to economic change. Election campaigns have so drummed up this antiquated loyalty of a man to his group, which like his religion is inherited, not a matter of his mature choice, that some people fear the freedoms of democracy which the voter is supposed to carry with him into the polling booth are nullified there by his inner inhibitions. Much of this fear is justified. Until the coming of democracy, more particularly adult franchise, caste used to be confined to the village: now it has been released into the general body politic. In the game of numbers, which elections are, everyone looks for the most numerous grouping as the base of his support and since caste, in K. M. Pannikar's phrase, is the largest group that Hindu society evolved, it was sucked into this game. In the process it broke out of the village. When groups set out in search of kin groups the affinities of caste, since they were ready-made, guided the search. Each candidate used his caste as the most handy slogan to reach out to the voters in his immediate vicinity, then drew his caste kin of surrounding villages together until his slogan spread out to the whole constituency, in the case of parties to the whole region. From the side of the voter also the same process began: he knew his bargaining power was only as great as the numbers in his group; to increase its size he also turned to the strongest available affinity. Economic affinities are a newer idea; they need to be cultivated. The appeal of caste is age-old and instant.

With this new use of caste its quality also changed. Within the village it used to be a stabiliser of a vertical system of

economic obligations. It bound the landlord to his traditional obligations towards the village priest, a higher caste, or the carpenter, a lower; because of it, each knew his station and duty. But between neighbouring villages there were no such obligations; when caste began to operate in that arena it did so as an antagonist, against other castes. Its loyalties became only an expression of inter-caste conflict. So what used quietly to permeate the closed world of the village now clamoured for the attention of all political forces. And there is reason to suspect that this tendency will grow. As democracy approximates still further to rural society, it will still more take on the characteristics of that society of which one of the most conspicuous is greater loyalty to caste than exists in the city. This has happened to the Congress; it is closer to the village than most other parties, hence also more caste-ridden. Caste will also sharpen its teeth, as it has been doing for some time, upon development funds; the division of this cake gives caste groups something to fight about. Caste and class antagonisms may reinforce each other, since lower castes are also generally the lowest economic classes. When power is captured by means of caste groupings, caste may grow stronger, as class always does, with a sense of its own power.

But all this is not just a one-sided process; it has its obverse, where caste loyalties are under constant attack from many modernizing forces, among them even elections which in the short run have only helped caste to fill up the stage. In the political arena caste is exposed to all the winds that blow; they will expose the group loyalty of caste to the same erosion to which economic change has exposed individual loyalty. Millions of Indians now travel in crowded buses and trains, first braving and then ignoring the risk of caste contamination which used to keep their great-grand parents from stirring out of their villages until companions of the right caste were found. Inherited job patterns have broken down and with them the greatest props upon which the caste structure rested that it determined not only a man's station in life but his occupation as well. Now a man takes the job he can get, especially if he has travelled away from his village; in the cities a man does not know his neighbour's caste even if he knows his occupation. making even more holes in the barriers of caste than

the banning of caste distinction in recruitment to public services (the only exception to the ban is that a certain percentage of jobs is reserved for the lowest strata, the scheduled castes, as temporary weightage in their favour). Caste distinctions have disappeared from most organized sectors of employment in commerce and industry; the disadvantage of the lower castes there is, not the candidate's denomination, but that there are not enough candidates of the right quality among castes which have suffered deprivation through the centuries. To the extent that politics follows in the footsteps of economics, changes in the latter are bound to affect the former.

The group loyalty of caste is exposed in politics to a number of other forces with which it has to come to terms. Sometimes language becomes the highest common factor between several parties. All other factors have to give way to it, even the loyalty of groups which are organized purely on caste lines. Sometimes the pulls of rival parties play upon the same caste or the same group of castes; two or more parties can play this game and each party sets up candidates of the caste most coveted for its numbers. Thus Communists wrestle with the DMK in Madras, with the Congress in Kerala, and with the Akali Dal in Punjab: for the loyalty of the middle and lower castes in the first case; of the Ezhavas, a lower caste in the second case, and of the Jat peasantry in the third. In much of Uttar Pradesh they and the Socialists compete with the Congress for the support of Muslims, hitherto loyal to the Congress but now more responsive to Leftist appeal. The Swatantra Party competes with the Akali Dal (when the two cannot join forces) for the support of the Sikhs, and the Congress always with the Republican Party for that of the scheduled castes. Of the effects, Myron Weiner has provided a vivid illustration.

After analysing a contest in Andhra in 1962 between two very prominent candidates, one standing on the Congress ticket and the other on the Swatantra, with a history of family feuds behind them—and one a Kamma, the other a Reddy, two castes which have a tighter confrontation with each other than any other castes in India—Weiner writes: "Though caste conflict has been an important ingredient in this struggle, it is apparent that caste constitutes simply one of a number of dynamic factors. Indeed, if caste were the primary factor involving

behaviour, it is likely that the Swatantra candidate would have won, since Kammas outnumber Reddies in this constituency. Moreover, though conflict between the Kammas and Reddies is a particularly important source of conflict in Andhra generally and (in this district) in particular, it would hardly be possible to understand the intra-party and inter-party conflicts by exclusive reference to caste.... In 1962 the leadership of all political parties was in the hands of members of the Kamma community; so it would be impossible to explain inter-party differences solely through an examination of caste."<sup>1</sup>

More interesting is the part that purely economic confrontation plays in the erosion of caste. In the electoral politics of Punjab, the middle class urban or semi-urban Hindu of the professions or commerce used to have a disproportionate share of political power, while the far more numerous agricultural classes were under-represented. About ten years ago the position was reversed: agriculturists joined hands and rolled to the top. But landless agriculturists developed economic interests of their own when they found that the landowning jat peasants were cornering all the benefits of community development; they became an electoral force on their own, especially in local elections, and began to make sure of their own share of the cake: where they needed, they took the help of the dispossessed urbanites. But even that equation did not stay stable for long. One among the scheduled castes, the chammars (traditionally leather workers but now almost everything besides), more aggressive and intelligent than the rest, were caught at the jat's game of taking the lion's share; so the rest of the scheduled castes joined up against *them*, often accepting the help of the former enemy, the jat. By the 1962 elections the position was so fluid that no candidate dared proclaim his caste identity too loudly; otherwise all others tended to gang up against him and reduce his caste base to minority. Especially so was this where, which means in nearly all constituencies, a multiplicity of candidates of the same caste or community made a multiple split in its numbers.

The economics of caste has worked a little faster in Punjab.

<sup>1</sup> *Panchyati Raj and the Congress Party*, to be published by the Chicago University Press in 1967.

where everything moves a little bit faster. But the caution prevails almost everywhere now, because the arithmetic of caste loyalty has become very tricky. The only exceptions may be in very backward areas where old loyalties may have suffered no jolts at all, multiple candidates of the same community may be infrequent, and numbers may more decisively favour one community or another, a most rare combination. The appeal to caste is muted by the danger of repercussions. So the play of caste upon politics is not deplorable altogether. In the short run it seems harmful. But in the long it weakens the exclusive loyalty of caste, exposes it to the many-sided pulls of the ballot-box, and in time may help merge the caste stratification with the economic. Even now—to get back to the little polling booth from where this long detour through Hindu society began—the voter is not really such a prisoner of the habits of his ancestors as psephology fears, and he is not afraid to use his freedom since he is convinced that there is no third eye inside the booth. So democracy can be said to have passed the first test well.

But granting that the voter is free to make his choice, does he have a meaningful range of choices before him? If he has not, he is like a man who is all dressed up but has nowhere to go. At first sight it would seem that this indeed is the case: he can only choose between half a dozen of one and six of the other. Indian society is still in a very nebulous state. Diversified and distinctive interests have not yet developed sufficiently; only when they do will they be able to throw up distinctive political forces. Clash of interests is sharp, even violent, when it occurs; but it is still superficial. The large rural mass is still quite amorphous; elsewhere recognizable shapes, such as trade unions and trading interests, have only recently entered the field of elections. That is why parties can get away with being vague and inconsistent; the Congress particularly is a political chameleon, much more a socialist at the time of elections than between them; much more in its pronouncements than policy; more in policy than actions. The Opposition parties are not less indefinite. Most of the time they are content with abuse of the Congress, declaiming its defects, which are numerous. They know they have no chance yet of ruling the country; therefore they can afford to be extravagant in their

promises and vague in suggesting matching measures. Election manifestos do not quantitate politics; no party has to say clearly what its priorities are.

Semantics also takes a hand in blurring manifestos. Some euphemisms are deliberately used, some occur because the same word means different things to different people. The Communist and Swatantra Parties both oppose "monopoly": the Communists by heaping choice invectives upon "the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few monopolists", the Swatantra Party by promising to end "monopoly and concentration of power whether in the State or the free sector... the monopoly at present enjoyed by Government Corporations such as the State Trading Corporation in certain fields of trade and the Life Insurance Corporation, State Transport Corporations and Authorities". The Jana Sangh simply burkes the issue by declaring about industry that "the doctrinaire distinction between public and private sectors will be abolished" and about agriculture that "the Jana Sangh will make the farmer master of his land". In the heat of such rhetoric definitions evaporate.

As far as manifestos go only three startlingly different things were offered to the voter in 1962: by the Swatantra Party that it would abolish "the much boosted Planning Commission"; by the Jana Sangh that it would abolish the federation and make India a unitary state; and by the Communists that it would nationalise "banking, general insurance, iron and steel, coal and other mining, oil, sugar, jute, tea plantations under foreign controls as well as import and export trade". For the rest most manifestos, when they came down to specifics, added items like "flood control" (PSP), "clean drinking water in rural areas... development of roads, culverts, bridges" (Swatantra), "industrial schools for training workers" (Jana Sangh), exposing each party to the jibe the Swatantra Party threw at the Congress: "... the Congress Party claims special credit for all things done by the Government during these past 14 years. Much of it is obviously what any Government which collects taxes and has undertaken the duties of administration must do. (They are not) a special merit of the Congress party."

But there is an undeniable other side also, even if it cannot be illustrated with excerpts from manifestos (though up to a point it can be). Their utterances and following may be equally

mixed up, but any one who knows the Indian political scene knows very well that the public images of the main parties are very different from each other, far more different than those of the Conservative and Labour Parties in Britain were in 1964 or those of the Democrats and Republicans in the United States have ever been in recent years except in 1964. No voter imagines that India under the Communists at one end or the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra Party at the other would be the same sort of place to live in as it has been (however difficult it might be to put a label on what it has been) under the Congress Party. The shading from one party to the next may be gradual. But that, not an unexpected result of the consensus about the economy which was described a little earlier, is one of the conditions for the survival of democracy. Nor is the shading so gradual that anyone can mistake the PSP for the Communists or the Jana Sangh for the Swatantra.

But the range of choice and the freedom to choose do not by themselves make a democracy successful. It has to be sustained by results, and by hope for the future. At each stage the results must show that the system, if not perfect, is improving, and bids fair to do better than any available alternative. Some of the worthwhile results have been discussed already: that the elections are giving, quite apart from reflecting it, a clear and better organised shape to India's politics; they are promoting the consolidation of political forces, thereby laying the ghost of India's fragmentation; they are assisting in the shift of power from a narrow urban to a broader rural base, thus and in other ways taking the centre of power a little closer to the people; while getting contaminated by the heiratic society they are also helping in the dissolution of castes. The net result is that the collective body of elected representatives is a far truer picture of the country as a whole—warts and all—than the more sedate debating societies of pre-independence days. It is less decorous than it used to be, but also less pale.

As the apex of the country's political life, Parliament has given repeated evidence of its power. A decade ago, Nehru paid it a handsome compliment when a masterly debate on certain charges against the Finance Ministry forced him to say a reluctant good-bye to a greatly valued colleague, the Finance Minister, T. T. Krishnamachari. Nehru said that the debate had



demonstrated "the majesty of Parliament." He bowed to it with some pleasure because if parliamentary democracy in India is any one man's creation it is his. A debate of equal excellence has not taken place since. But in the daily exercise of its primary function—to represent the people and to bring the pressure of their opinion, even of their prejudices and unreasoning passions to bear upon the Government—this forum grows in strength year by year. There are several signs of the growth, which are also among the causes.

First, it has become much more integrated with the anxieties and tensions of the life of the country. Each of the three Parliaments elected since independence has been more integrated in this sense than its predecessor, and Parliament as an institution has been a great deal more integrated than its pre-independence predecessor, the Central Assembly. Almost nothing of any importance now happens anywhere in India or in her external relations which does not promptly become a subject of hot debate and exchanges in Parliament. Conversely, anything of importance said in Parliament immediately touches off a debate outside. Sometimes the two debates are held within earshot of each other: the more organized parties, especially the Communists and the Janā Sangh, on occasions lead massive demonstrations right up to the portals of Parliament, and the throb of this mass is felt within; MPs come out in groups to address the demonstrators while others try inside to raise the slogans of the demonstration on the floor of the House. More frequently the two debates mingle on the more conventional forums of the Press and public platform.

Since the extra-parliamentary debate is not limited by any rules of procedure it frequently takes up issues which are outside the constitutional limits of Parliament's jurisdiction, such as matters which fall within the rights of States; the mingling then forces them upon the attention of Parliament. One result is that more than a third of the time at each session is taken up nowadays with current controversy and the policies of the Government. Passing bills is no longer the only function of Parliament. In fact, purely legislative work is being increasingly relegated to committees, whose performance is usually of a fairly high order. (Two examples of assertive and vigilant committees, though they are not legislative, are the Public

Accounts Committee and the Estimates Committee, which keep such a critical gaze turned on the Government's finances that they have become a thorn in the side of ministers and bureaucrats).

Any controversy which succeeds in invading Parliament House ceases to be an empty exchange of arguments; its course and outcome have a powerful impact upon the Government's thinking. Seeing how small the numerical strength of the Opposition is, one would imagine that what it says would be of little consequence to the Government. But its numerical inferiority is vastly offset by three sources of its power. In debating talent and tenacity, an average Opposition member is worth two on the Government benches. This may be because he is less inhibited by the sense of responsibility which the party in power has; the more likely reason, however, is that he has come through a tougher test of survival than the average Congress MP whose way was hitherto made smoother by the prestige of the party and of Nehru. Secondly, the aggregate vote behind the Opposition benches is greater than behind the Congress, and given the democratic temper of Indian politics, this has a sobering effect upon the Government and makes it more responsive to the wishes of the Opposition. The third and most important reason is the nature of the Congress: it is little more than an aggregate of Opposition Parties. There is hardly any point of view on the Opposition benches which does not have a fairly sizeable representation within the Congress, sometimes more sizeable than on the opposite side of the House (Jana Sangh and Swatantra Party MPs are certainly fewer than Congress MPs who think like them). Therefore, anything an Opposition Party says on the floor of the House strikes up a magnified echo within the Congress, especially at closed-door party meetings of Congress MPs, and it strongly reacts upon the politics of the Government. This gives a reality to Parliament's proceedings which the arithmetics of its membership would not suggest.

A growing blot upon the "majesty of Parliament" is that far too often, and with increasing frequency in recent years, confusion and disorder take the place of forceful debate. Not only does each disorder become a precedent for worse in subsequent sessions; the example which State Legislatures set with their

own more thoroughly reprehensible behaviour is increasingly infecting Parliament also. Wholesale eviction of struggling and screaming members by the Marshal of the House has had to be ordered in State Assemblies on many occasions; on some in Parliament too. More frequent still are undignified and noisy protest walk-outs by the entire Opposition. Less than three months after Nehru's death, 68 members of the Opposition were ordered out of the State Assembly of Uttar Pradesh, the home State of India's three successive Prime Ministers; Nehru, Shastri and now Indira Gandhi; three weeks after Mrs. Gandhi became Prime Minister the entire Opposition had to be expelled. Throughout the first half of 1966 the fabric of parliamentary life was in tatters in West Bengal.

Public opinion would have to be extremely insensitive to events if after all this its faith in the parliamentary system remained undisturbed. Unless the behaviour of members improves the institutions of this system will incur the contempt of the people, who may be tempted one day to scrap the system itself. Some signs of impatience have appeared already. Soon after Shastri became Prime Minister the misbehaviour of some MPs reached extraordinary heights; the Opposition threw restraint to the winds, the new leadership seemed unable to assert itself, and the daily encounter between the two sides became such an undignified spectacle that the thoughts of many people turned to the presidential system. Since Parliament seemed unable to correct itself the belief lost ground that the presidential system could easily become dictatorial, that with its daily accountability to Parliament gone, the executive could descend into virtually irremovable incompetence. The Madras Minister of Industries announced that at the next meeting of the Congress executive he would formally move that the parliamentary system be abolished in favour of the presidential, though it was the former, with its capacity for bringing opposing forces into dynamic equilibrium, which was the best guarantee that South India would never have to complain once more that it was being neglected by the North. His resolution never came up and Parliament escaped with an undeclared reprieve. But since then disorders have mounted, not subsided.

However, by the time the Years of Nehru ended it was possible to distinguish between two different causes of these



You mean you're not joining us in the walk-out? You seem to forget you are elected to serve your country and not just to sit there like that!



I didn't know he was an M.L.A. .... We were arguing and he staged a walkout.

disorders. Only one of them could be called a threat to parliamentary life; the other was one of its sources of strength. The former, a deliberate campaign by the Communists to vilify democracy and bring its institutions to a halt, was to become more ominous a little later;<sup>1</sup> the latter was making Parliament a more real thing than it used to be. Adult franchise was churning up the depths of Indian society and throwing up members unexposed to education or modern institutions of any kind or the sophistication of the council chamber phase of the struggle for freedom. They came to Parliament as strangers to the decorum expected of them, trailing behind them the clouds of dust and the habit of shouting made familiar to them by their unbringing at the hustings. But in their own way they were as worthwhile members as the learned lawyers who used to come into Parliament on the coat tails of Nehru, uncontaminated by the brawling which an adult franchise election involves. Their accents and behaviour were distressingly crude; but by that much they were truer representatives of a mass democracy. Their concern, as increasingly the country's, was more with bread and butter politics than with the distant horizons of international politics and on that they spoke with untutored eloquence. Their speeches might have offended procedure but meant more to the constituents and added more to the glow of the interacting debates inside and outside the legislature. But the more receptive and intelligent among them soon understood that *this forum gave more power to those who accepted its rules*, and it was not a coincidence that in the last Parliament elected under Nehru the most effective members were relatively new entrants who had made the adjustment. There was every reason to hope then that others would also profit by their example and in time exchange their first term behaviour for good conduct as parliamentarians in the second term.

<sup>1</sup> See the last chapter.

## NON-ALIGNED INDIA IN FACT AND FICTION

SOME OF the rhetoric of Nehru's foreign policy and some tactical mistakes by him made it appear from time to time—to Washington nearly all the time—that he took an ideological view of the world. The fact, however, is that he was far less concerned with ideology or with the international line-up created by it than with power factors and their implications for India's security and world interests. A great deal earlier than many other statesmen, he made a distinction between the power interests of the Soviet Union and China, though ideologically he would have lumped them together as the rest of the world did. He wrote in the early 'fifties that India's relation with China might not be entirely in consonance with her relations with the Soviet Union: "I see that both the U.S.A. and the U.K. on the one hand and the U.S.S.R. on the other, for entirely different reasons, are not anxious that India and China should be friendly towards each other. That itself is a significant fact which has to be borne in mind . . . . What will happen to China during the next few years is anybody's guess. But it is a complete misunderstanding of the China situation to imagine that they function like a satellite state of Russia. Only one thing will push China in that direction to some extent: and even then this cannot go far—that one thing is isolation from the rest of the world."

Quite apart from any feelings that he had for China this is the key to the efforts he made right until the Chinese attack in 1962 to get China admitted to the United Nations, to help it get acquainted with the Afro-Asian world, and generally to reduce China's dependence upon the Soviet Union. In some ways this is the obverse of the policy which India in the last few years has followed with regard to Vietnam. It puzzles American opinion to see India less than lukewarm about the USA's military effort in Vietnam to check the spread of Chinese influence in South-East Asia. India has never believed that the injection of American military power in Vietnam is a better

answer to the influence of China than the indigenous nationalism of the Vietnamese people. But that apart, India dreads the prospect of the Sino-Soviet rift being healed by any escalation of the war in Vietnam; if it were, India again would be faced with what it has sought to avoid, and circumstances have helped it to avoid, a monolithic Communist overhang in the north stretching from Eastern Europe to Shanghai.

The same conclusion hangs at the end of another line of argument. Whether Nehru was hard or soft—by turns he was both—on the Communist view of social and economic problems, he was strongly against it whenever he suspected it to be in conflict with national independence. He was never more against the Communist Party of India than when he thought it was drawing its sustenance from other countries. And he never admired any Communist leadership more than when it proved, as Tito's has been proving for almost a decade and Ho Chi Minh's did during the decade of the 'fifties, that in spite of its Communism it could be wholly indigenous and nationalistic; and even then he could not overlook some of the methods of Communism which he always found distasteful. What pleased him most about the Panchsheel statement, which he signed with China and propagated in many capitals of the world, was that he thought it would commit China to abstain from interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries, including India. His hopes were disproved. But it was as a nationalist, seeking to protect his own and other countries' nationalism from subversion, and not as a camouflaged Communist, that he became the flag-bearer of Panchsheel, a more ardent flag-bearer, it should be noted, than anyone in China. He even carried the message to Moscow and made it a part of the first public speech ever to be made in Moscow by a non-Communist leader speaking under the sign of the hammer and sickle. On the other hand, when the Soviet Union proposed "a collective peace pact in Asia" in 1958, Nehru extended a cold shoulder towards it. As likely as not, he would also have offered it the positive hostility which he offered to SEATO and CENTO if the "peace pact" had been more military in nature and had carried the same sort of implications for India as Pakistan's membership of these two pacts did.

The question has been perennially asked in India and abroad



that if Nehru was, in fact, non-aligned as between the two power systems represented by the United States and the Soviet Union, and if he did, in fact, take a non-ideological view of the world, why was India so often seen in Soviet company and so rarely in American in so many votes in the United Nations? There were occasions, of course, when she was not. In the debates on the repatriation of Korean prisoners of war, India presented a scheme which was supported by Britain, opposed by the United States and accepted by the Soviet Union. When Krishna Menon amended it to make it acceptable to the United States, he found himself supported by Washington and opposed by Moscow and of course by China. But the amended India resolution was accepted by all the non-Communist countries (except Formosa, which abstained) and this was the first time that the entire Asian and Arab bloc voted on the same side as the Western powers. Krishna Menon could not have been unpopular in the United States on that occasion at least. But on the whole it is true that India and the Soviet Union were more often on the same side than opposed. There was understandable perplexity in the State Department, to which Schlesinger refers in *A Thousand Days* when he describes the searching questions Kennedy put to his Ambassadors and advisers to find out why the neutrals "appeared to judge American actions with such severity and Soviet actions with such apparent charity".

But it would be a mistake to discover a causal connection between this voting record and the fact that India's relations with the United States were generally not as happy as those with the Soviet Union. A more satisfactory explanation lies in the basic premises of India's foreign policy. These have been discussed earlier<sup>1</sup> and need only to be flagged in this context. First, China should be admitted to the United Nations, less for the sake of China than the United Nations and the world; second, nationalism is a stronger force than international Communism and the best remedy for the latter's infiltration tactics; third, it is better that a country is strong and independent and nobody's camp follower, even if under a Communist government, than that it be defended against Communism by methods which weaken its nationalism; fourth, the nationalism of coun-

<sup>1</sup> See—"A Place in the World."

tries recently freed from colonialism is more allergic to the former colonial powers than to the economic and social contents of Communism; and fifth, it is important for the development of the new countries that international tensions should be lowered, not heightened into a cold or a hot war. One may accept or reject these premises. But they, more than sympathy for the Soviet Union, explain India's record in international debate. The inclination these factors would have caused in any case was accentuated by the contrast between Soviet and American policies towards the non-aligned and the Afro-Asian countries. While the Soviet Union made them a special target of its diplomatic charm, the USA for many years had a blind spot towards them. Schlesinger gives a revealing account of the obstinate reluctance of the State Department to do anything which would look like building a bridge to the Belgrade Conference of the non-aligned countries.

## II

Three main examples are often cited as proof that Nehru himself did not live up to these premises. These are Nehru's acquiescence in the suppression of Tibet by China, his reluctant opposition to Soviet intervention in Hungary and the military action he took to end Portuguese rule in Goa. It cannot be gainsaid that Nehru's record is far from clean in these three cases. At best there are some partial excuses for it. It is possible to suspect that in the case of Goa he was carried along by Krishna Menon, then at the height of his influence in the government while Nehru was definitely declining already in his physical and mental powers. If Nehru had been more in the habit of consulting his Cabinet he might have received advice which would correct Menon's. But the intended action was not brought before the Cabinet at all, and even before the Defence Sub-Committee of the Cabinet it was brought only after Indian troops had been positioned in Belgaum and the only question remaining to be decided was when they should move. At this meeting Morarji Desai urged that the action be postponed till after the elections. But he was overruled.

It is more debatable whether Menon himself was carried away by misleading intelligence or by the calculation that the

conquest of Goa would improve his chances in the electoral contest he was going to face only two months later. That the contest was in Bombay, a city acutely conscious of Portuguese rule in Goa, suggests the calculation; his campaigners certainly projected him as the "liberator of Goa". The scale of the military effort he mounted, which was far in excess of what was needed, suggests, on the other hand, wrong intelligence. But Nehru's consent for the operation has to be placed alongside the suspicion widely current at that time in India that there was a growing collusion between Pakistan and Portugal. Economic plans had been drawn up between the two countries based upon joint exploitation of the rich iron-ore mines in Goa. From these, it was feared, military collusion might not be far off, especially if China's hostility, already unmistakable at that time, diverted India's capabilities to the distant Himalayan frontiers.

His policy about Tibet was entirely of his own making. The four corners within which he framed it were that even before the Communists came to power in Peking, Tibet had been subordinate to China and since independence, at any rate, India had not disputed this fact; that the best India could hope to get for Tibet was fair and just treatment by Peking, not independence; that it could best secure this treatment by not protesting too loudly against what China was doing, since India in any case did not have the means to follow up the protest with anything more effective; and that not only for the sake of Tibet but the stable and peaceful development of most Asian countries it was necessary that India's relations with China should be good. But he miscalculated badly. Whether India's protests might have helped Tibet or not, depending upon Peking's goodwill certainly did not. India herself was not spared. A shower of abuse descended upon her when, in a few statements in Parliament, Nehru showed a little sympathy for Tibet's autonomy. In retrospect at least it appears that India might have been on better grounds morally and politically if it had taken a stronger stand in favour of Tibet's autonomy, even if she did not consider it justifiable to reverse recognition of China's suzerainty.

Of the three, Nehru's record is the weakest with regard to Hungary, and it is made to look weaker still by the strongly

contrasting stand he took about Egypt, at the same time. Here was a case which on the face of it should have aroused Nehru's deepest anger. A small country, stubbornly nationalistic, and one of Eastern Europe's most colourful people, struggling to set up a more liberal regime, had been brought under the heel of Soviet armed forces. Not only was a liberal movement crushed in Hungary, but a blow delivered at a growing tendency towards nationalistic aspirations in the Communist half of Europe. But Nehru's protest, though strong later on was, to begin with, late and hesitant. Krishna Menon made the hesitations much worse when, while thundering in the United Nations against the Anglo-French attack on Egypt, he became the only non-Communist member to hesitate in condemning Soviet intervention and the only one to vote with the Communist bloc on a crucial resolution.

But not all the hesitations were either as long or as indefensible as Nehru's critics made them appear; not all of Krishna Menon's votes were diabolical. India could not possibly have supported one of the Western resolutions being pressed at the United Nations because in its operative part it asked for elections in Hungary under U.N. supervision. Krishna Menon was right in objecting that "We cannot say that a sovereign member of this assembly can be called upon to submit its elections to the United Nations without its agreement". But the simple condemnation of the Soviet intervention he should have supported and did not.

Nehru's own performance was a puzzling mixture of light and shade. He promptly condemned the Anglo-French attack on Egypt which began on October 31, 1956. But he was silent on the fighting in Hungary in the last few days of that month for the reason, which he was to give later, that on October 31 the Soviet Union offered negotiations for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from all East European countries. On November 4 Soviet troops made their main thrust into Hungary and this time Nehru's comment, though still hesitant, was quicker. At a UNESCO conference in New Delhi on November 5 he said: "We see today in Egypt as well as in Hungary both human dignity and freedom outraged, and the forces of modern arms used to suppress peoples and to gain political objectives." There was still no condemnation of the Soviet Union by name, not

even five days later when the highest deliberative body of the Congress party passed a thousand-word resolution on international affairs containing only two references to Hungary: "In Hungary there has been a civil conflict involving considerable loss of life, as well as the use of foreign armed forces... the Congress hopes that the foreign troops in Hungary will be withdrawn and the people of Hungary decide their own future by peaceful methods." But the resolution strongly and specifically condemned the Western powers. An amendment to this resolution seeking to correct the imbalance was rejected; no one voted for it. Nehru's own comment: what appeared to have occurred in Hungary was "a civil conflict" (presumably a reference to the bitter feud between the Stalinist Matyas Rakosi, and the relatively liberal Imre Nagy) and Soviet troops appeared to have returned "on the invitation of the new Government of Hungary". A day later he denied that India was looking at the events in Egypt and Hungary "from different viewpoints". "We are deeply grieved by the killings in Hungary and our sympathy goes out to that country's people.... Egypt and Hungary have been made to suffer because of the rivalries between the big nations."

The next day the Prime Ministers of Indonesia, Burma, Ceylon and India, at a meeting, initially arranged in New Delhi to discuss developments in Egypt, also took up the affairs of Hungary and expressed "strong disapproval and distress at the aggression and intervention by great powers against weaker countries". In this company Nehru's voice began to come through more clearly. The joint statement regretted that Soviet forces had not been withdrawn from Hungary in accordance with the policy announced by Moscow earlier. They urged that these forces should be withdrawn "speedily and that the Hungarian people should be left free to decide their own future without external intervention from all quarters". A week later, Nehru was still more forthright. In a speech in Parliament, he said: "There is little doubt that the national uprising there... was ultimately suppressed by the Soviet armed forces... the majority of the Hungarian people wanted political and economic changes, rose in insurrection to achieve them, but were suppressed... Perhaps even more significant than the fighting is the fact that when fighting stopped, there was an extraordinary

demonstration of passive resistance.... It was a movement with great masses of people behind it... the Soviet armies were there against the wishes of the Hungarian people.... I have no doubt in my mind that sooner or later the Hungarian people, who have demonstrated so visibly their desire for freedom, for separate identity, for not being overshadowed by any other country, are bound to triumph.... These events have powerfully affected the prestige of the Soviet Union, not only in many countries which are supposed to be uncommitted but in European countries which supported the USSR.... Ten years have passed since the last war, and if in the course of ten years the people of Hungary could not be converted to Communism it shows failure... far greater it seems to me than the failure of a military coup."

Until official records of the period are released, it will be difficult to discover what exactly made Nehru so hesitant in speaking out his mind earlier. But two inferences can be hazarded for what they are worth. On European problems Tito, no stooge of the Russians at that time or since, was a trusted adviser of Nehru, and Tito, though sitting next door to Hungary, had strong doubts regarding the real forces at work behind the revolt during some of its phases. He expressed these doubts in public and quite clearly must have communicated them to Nehru as well. It is not unlikely that this made Nehru also cautious about the nature of the rebellion. The second inference relates to the Western attack upon Egypt and the fact that by the end of October Nagy had proclaimed Hungary to be a neutral country and was seeking "assurances" from the Western powers. (Later, Nagy was to take sanctuary in the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest). Rumour, unsupported by any evidence, had converted into intention what Tito only referred to as "propaganda" by the Western powers "in favour of liberation of the East European countries". The attack upon the Suez came within a few days of the start of the trouble in Hungary. Was there a possible connection between the two? Were "outside" elements, in fact, present behind the scenes in Hungary, whether or not they were "fascists" as Nehru had called them? Was the nationalization of the Suez Canal by Egypt being used only as the smoke-screen for assembling a sufficiently large Western force—and the force was large com-

pared with anything that Egypt could have put together to resist it—so that it should be at hand for intervention in Eastern Europe, should the opportunity occur?

There was at least one Western statement at that time which claimed that the Anglo-French intervention in Egypt aimed at preventing Russia from coming into the Middle East. To this Nehru referred when he said: "I confess I do not see how it has prevented Russia from coming in. It is, in fact, possible that a door has been opened through which the Russians might come in in future." Was this claim only the obverse of an opposite intention? The state of the East-West cold war was such at the time that possibilities of this kind could not be ruled out entirely. Was it this that Nehru referred to when he said on November 19 that certain things were still not very clear? If he did have any such suspicion in mind, silence might have appeared to him to be the least that was called for.

### III

In an overall assessment of Nehru's foreign policy, which matters more than its individual operations, what stands out most is that like many innovators he became too rigidly fond of his own innovation; he could not see, or not until too late, the need for readjustments in it. Events overtook and raced ahead of his policy. As numerous earlier pages suggest, the basic shape of the policy was sound and durable. He could not have chosen better guides than non-alignment and nationalism for India's "operational voyage" in world affairs. Despite the stones thrown at them lately, they are still winning converts in unexpected places.

More Americans believe now than in Nehru's lifetime that military pacts are not the answer to international Communism; far better is it to help self-reliant societies to pose the challenge of social justice to Communist tactics. The tall man of France says, whatever his motives for saying so, that pacts are bad for the national will. More people would now agree than ever in the past that an independent and unified Vietnam, be it Communist, would add more stability to South-East Asia than a Vietnam torn by an endless war. That American arms can be misused is more obvious to more people now than when Nehru

protested against their supply to Pakistan in such abundance. There is the conspicuous testimony of Galbraith now that "If we had not supplied arms, Pakistan would not have sought a military solution... The full consequences of the policy of indiscriminate arms have revealed themselves with a kind of heroic clarity in South Asia.... We arm those (in Latin America) who defend privilege, absorb enormous income without economic *quid pro quo* and stifle progress". Galbraith did not put it into so many words as *Baltimore Sun* did, about the same time, that arms were supplied to Pakistan to prop up a military regime there. But he did warn, as Nehru used to, that "Military aid acts to cancel both our economic aid and our support to social reform". In the Communist world also there are more adherents for peaceful co-existence now, in spite of the obstinate exception that China has become, than when Nehru preached the virtues of Panchsheel in Moscow. On that score no praise for Nehru's prescience could be excessive.

But he remained a preacher for a little too long instead of taking time off to bring the gospel up to date. In this respect his visit to the USA in 1961 was a critical failure. Five years earlier when he met Eisenhower, he showed better appreciation of the fact, already obvious to many, that changes had taken place in India and the USA which made better relations between the two countries possible and, from India's point of view, necessary. But both changes were far more marked in 1961, and yet Nehru did not respond to them, or at least according to the accounts—mostly American—so far available of his meeting with Kennedy. Much more than his predecessors, Kennedy understood the neutralists' approach to world affairs and he valued it up to a point. He was also a convert to co-existence with Russia, and his views about foreign aid were similar to India's. And to crown it all by the time Nehru met Kennedy, both had been fully exposed to the dangerous swell of ambitions in Peking. Yet the meeting produced no basis for a new relationship in future; the young President found no resilience in the ageing Prime Minister. Fatigue and old ideas had settled upon the latter.

In Nehru's mind till the end of his days, hence in the mind of the country at large, India's foreign policy struck a balance which was always a little—sometimes more than a little—unfair.



to the USA and un-neutrally warm to the Soviet Union. To some extent the fault was neither Nehru's nor India's. On the one issue which mattered so much to India for so many years, the future of Kashmir, the Soviet Union weighed in clearly on the Indian side; the USA did not. On Goa, the Soviet Union came out with unsolicited and thus doubly welcome support, while the USA frowned so heavily upon the taking of Goa that Nehru wrote to Kennedy: "Why is it that something that thrills our people should be condemned in the strongest language in the United States?"

But when that has been said, and to that added the reminder given by innumerable issues that Soviet thinking is closer to India's than the USA's is, the fact remains that in economic as well as diplomatic relations the Soviet Union got a little more and the USA a little less than the credit due each for their help to India. Even after China had unmasked its real attitude to India and although the USA's support became more massive and unambiguous than the Soviet Union's, the USA's account remained a little in the red in the ledgers of Indian public opinion. A clear example of this came in the 1,000 Kw transmitter "VOA Deal" at the end of 1963, a bare year or so after the Chinese attack, when the contrast between the US and Soviet support for India should have been fresh in the public mind. The proposition which the VOA made was ridiculous—that a powerful transmitter would be supplied to India for political broadcasts to China's neighbours and India would pay for the transmitter by giving time on it to VOA. Nothing would have more clearly defeated the purpose of Indian broadcasts than that they should co-habit the same transmitter with the VOA. But the proposition needed only to be studied on merits and, as suited India, accepted or rejected. Instead it blew up into an anti-US furor, while a ninety-five million dollar loan for the far more important Tarapore nuclear reactor put through at roughly the same time received hardly any notice.

In economic negotiations, even those which may have political overtones, it was always possible for the Soviet Union to drive with impunity much harder bargains than the United States can ever hope—or tries to. A latter-day example is the Bokharo steel mill project. Few of India's project agreements with other countries have been as much an imposition on India as the

Bokharo agreement, signed in 1966. More important, Indian interests have never been so openly disregarded, including her desire to give scope to Indian technical skills to contribute whatever they are able to. At a time when self-reliance is a powerful slogan in India the Soviet Union has paid it not the slightest heed. Yet it has raised hardly any controversy, compared with the noise over some concessions given to private American capital for investment in the equally essential and much less expensive fertiliser programme. It is true that the Russians again showed diplomatic finesse by picking up Bokharo when the Americans abandoned it—this happened long before Nehru's death—and thus gave satisfaction to Indian opinion when the latter was most ready to receive it with pleasure. Thereafter hard bargains were easy to drive. But it is the function of Indian leadership to see that Indian opinion is moved more by facts than finesse.

Some of the climate in which this opinion was formed was set from time to time by American mistakes, but the greater influence upon it was the weight given to these mistakes by those who guided the Indian public's assessments. Nehru and the people around him were not the minor leaders of a minority party; they were the makers, not creatures, of public opinion. Yet if they tried at all they did so insufficiently to ensure that prejudice did not dominate public debate. For the first decade of Nehru's Prime Ministership, it could be said that Indo-US divergencies were too important, too many and basic for the Indian public's view of the USA to be anything but adverse. But after that, differences began to narrow perceptibly and it should have been possible to bridge the gap entirely by 1961, a year before China's major attack. Any arrangements for help that Nehru might have made at the time he could have successfully attributed to changes in the view Washington took of the world and therefore in the view he could take of Washington. They would not have been regarded, as they came to be, as steps taken in a state of panic for sheer survival. But the resilience which timely readjustment requires had probably gone out of Nehru by that time. Hence also the other mistake he made about the same time, with much more serious consequences: he neither prepared India for the impending clash with China nor avoided the clash by soft-peddalling the border

dispute so that some sort of a settlement, however temporary, could be made even if it involved some marginal loss of territory. With a little suppleness in his own mind and cleverer projection of the needs of the moment he could have brought about acceptance of the less palatable by Indian opinion in order to buy off the more dangerous. But such hard-headed, realistic and yet flexible leadership Nehru could not provide any longer. For far too long he had been living, as he was to confess after the Chinese attack, "in an artificial atmosphere of our own creation".

## CHAPTER 17

### A TOUCH OF TODAY

As THE institutions of Indian politics—parties, elections, Parliament, foreign policy—flowed into the moulds created for them during the years of Nehru, the content of politics began to respond to his passionate commitment to the twentieth century; and in this as much as in any other sense, he was the man who made modern India. The quality of the change he wrought shows in the change in the substance of debate from the early 'fifties to the late. Fifteen years ago, a visitor from Europe would have had the experience of Rip Van Winkle in reverse; he would have found himself in the earlier centuries of his own continent, when attacks upon orthodoxy were the main substance of public debate, not the problems of international or domestic Communism, or rival ways of locating and resolving economic problems. Today he would be a great deal more at home. He would find the issues and idiom more familiar to him, and the variation in them, as he travelled from one region to another or from the gatherings of one party to another's, a great deal less than fifteen years ago. He would still find quantities that would mystify him completely. The resurgence and unrest among some of the tribes for example, and to a lesser extent the power of the DMK in South India. Their emphasis upon ethnic differences would remind him of the middle ages of Europe. The sway of the Sikh church upon the community's politics, the remnants of the Muslim League, the passion that language still arouses, the hold of a faction leader upon his following, and more than all this, the shadow of death over Indian politics, death through fasting, mob violence or the actions of authorities—these areas of the Indian scene he would find baffling and strange.

But not the main areas of Indian politics, and their normal manifestations. Here he would know what portents to look for and how to read them when he found them. He would find that an extraordinary part of the debate, extraordinary because these quantities are very new to Indian politics, is about how

much planning and by what methods, the rival magnetisms of democracy and revolution, and the eruptions of the politics of bread in the streets. And if he compared the present and the past he would find it an astonishing fact that within the short span of only a little more than a decade, and almost unnoticed by history or chronicle, one part of the politics of the extreme Right has shifted its moorings from feudalism to capitalism, another part from religious revivalism to something much closer to fascism, still dark but of the twentieth century.

Already by the time of the second general elections in 1957, it was possible to divide the mainstream of argument into four main parts; the substance of politics was the interplay between them. Those who were equally committed to parliamentary democracy and modernization of the economy and society were the first and largest part; whatever their party they were the main support of Nehru's growing philosophy of democratic socialism. The second stream consisted of people equally opposed to modernization and parliamentary democracy, and to the latter equally because it was modern and unacceptable to the streak of authoritarianism in them. Politically the most important among them was the RSS face of the Jana Sangh. Slightly less important were the dispossessed feudal elements (who were later to join the Swatantra Party), the dispossessed Princes and landlords. The other half of both the Jana Sangh and the second recruitment area of the Swatantra, the modern capitalists, together formed the third element, along with a great many people in the Congress though probably not the majority, who supported democracy and modernization of the society and economy but not through methods or at a pace which they believed to be incompatible with democracy. The fourth, and next to the first the most important part, were those whose commitment to modernization, especially of the economy, was total but to parliamentary democracy, to say the least, doubtful. The bulk of them were the extreme faction among the Communists but they also carried with them an assortment of anti-Communists such as some of the more forward-looking Jana Sangh members and some bureaucrats who were impatient with democracy's pace or were in love with the power that 'State capitalism placed in their hands.

From the late 'fifties onwards the third group gained at the

expense of the second, so that such opposition to democracy as remained came not from those who found it too modern or too equalitarian for their tastes but from those who considered its pace too slow or its nature too tolerant of the market economy. Even within the first group this change was taking place: the debate inside the Congress ceased to be between the traditional and the modern, as it was when Nehru unseated Tandon, but between two relatively modern quantities, the Right and the Left; the change became especially marked after the Nagpur resolutions. With the first and the third groups committed to democracy and the fourth to a combination of Communism and State capitalism, the inevitable net resultant was democratic socialism; at the end of the Nehru era it seemed a safe prediction that the future belonged to this approach, whether with more socialism in it or less depending upon a shifting balance between many circumstances.

The only threat to it appeared to be from external sources. As experience had shown already in 1962 and as could be inferred for the future as well, aggression from any quarter would heat up nationalism till the normal forms of democracy could not stand the strain. All parties could benefit to some extent by grafting upon the anxieties of the people the suspicion that the Congress had neglected the country's defences; but an ultra-nationalist party like the Jana Sangh would benefit most. And it would benefit equally from Chinese and Pakistani aggression: the latter would rouse not only nationalism but more especially its revivalist Hindu manifestation; the former would embarrass the Communists, the only rivals of the Jana Sangh in the field of organized militancy. But in 1964 it did not seem that the Jana Sangh would become a serious threat either to democracy or socialism; the Communist Party's threat to democracy, which was to become a little more serious a little later, would not be a threat to the modernization of India.

Along with this trend towards modernization, another change was also taking place; the standardization of the idiom and content of debate in most parts of India, making the country more homogeneous at least if not also, or not yet, more united. Some connotations of some idioms may have suffered a sea change as political vocabulary travelled from other countries to this; but not so in most of its inland travels. Barring the

exceptions mentioned below and those mentioned at the start of this chapter about the linguistic, ethnic and tribal quantities in Indian politics, which may vary from one part of the country to another and which a foreigner may find a little difficult to comprehend, the substance of debate all over the country was now in terms which were more or less constant and more or less familiar to the Western mind. Such was the case with the debate about the functioning of caste as an economic lobby, the erosion by the Communists of their neighbours on the political spectrum, their own inner clashes between the Right and Left wings, the tussle between the conservatives and the socialists inside the Congress, the inter- and intra-party battles for winning or retaining power with weapons which are known all over the world.

In political terms, therefore, and in the phrases of Morris-Jones, the complexities of "an ancient society", fragmented to a great depth despite the unity below, each fragment frozen into its shape for centuries, had changed into the complexities of "a nation state". The language of a great deal of Indian politics, he adds, "is a language which speaks of politics and interests, programmes and plans. It expresses itself in arguments and representations, discussions and demonstrations, deliberations and decisions. Within this idiom are conducted several momentous conflicts of principles and tussles of interests. These are so wide-ranging that observers could be forgiven for greeting this Indian politics as a well-recognised and familiar friend and assuming that this is the whole Indian politics, the complete story".

Which, of course, it is not. There are many areas of Indian politics and many layers of it where the Gandhian language is more often heard; a kind of moral judgment is applied to politics which is more peculiarly of yesterday's India than of that in which the free enterpriser makes his claims upon the economy and its planners or in which the Socialist or the Communist denies them. In this language village industries are important because they have a moral value for the village, not because they are labour intensive; cow-dung is better than chemical fertilizers not because it is safer to use but because it is descended from the cow; and—while on cows—none of them should be converted into money-making hides even if

their numbers are proving ruinous for the economy. Some people are bi-lingual: Gulzarilal Nanda, for several years Minister of Planning, was at the same time President of the Sadhu Samaj, a body of saffron-robed recruits through whom he hoped to spread the message of planning. His alleged reliance upon soothsayers, often the subject of not so good-humoured jokes about him, became the cause of some sharply worded questions in Parliament in 1966.

Outside the area of government and politics many lives are blissfully led in the terminology of this language alone; led and sometimes lost: a few days after the questions in Parliament about the astrologer, a girl died in a village in Gujarat because the village elders put her to the ordeal of fire to prove her fidelity. At certain levels such incidents become the substance of politics; some politicians can hardly ever rise above this level. At certain moments, if not at the same level, the ancient and the ultra-new coexist in dramatic contradiction. On August 4, 1956, India's (and Asia's) first atomic reactor, built entirely by Indian engineers, went into operation, releasing energy through self-sustained chain reaction. The same day an organization working for the welfare of the scheduled castes in Bihar reported that it had come across instances which virtually amounted to the practice of slavery: forced labour was being exacted from landless workers belonging to the scheduled castes against loans advanced to their forefathers.

But Nehru imparted to public life, at least to as much of it as was close enough to his reach, a twentieth century tone which is as good a measure of the impact of his modern-mindedness upon India as the works of high technology set up in his life-time. Because of him there was a rare degree of intellectual freedom, a willing acceptance of the right of vigorous and even impetuous dissent, which gave everyone the assurance that anyone whose mind had the ability to innovate would never lack the opportunity to propagate his innovation. Many original ideas flourished in this atmosphere of freedom: Vinoba Bhave captured the imagination of the country with his movement for voluntary gifts of land for the landless; for a time a State Government handed over to him the responsibility of ridding a large area of a band of murderous dacoits: he succeeded in bringing many to voluntary surrender. His close associate,



Jayaprakash Narayan, found packed audiences at his lectures when he came up with his novel thesis of politics without parties, though the starting point of his argument could only have caused some embarrassment to Nehru: that the present system of elections had meant the rule of a minority over the majority; therefore the right of the present rulers to rule was of questionable validity. From Nehru's personal life an atmosphere radiated in which the arts flourished so unexpectedly well that the past ten years have been like a minor renaissance in India. Not unexpectedly, when his daughter was elected Prime Minister, and the same morning was seen wearing a red rose as he used to, *The Statesman* editorially wrote: "The uncharitable may see in this a sign of dynastic symbolism; roses have been so used in history. But we prefer to hope that this was a happy omen, containing promise of a return to things the fragrance of which has been missed for some years. Mr. Nehru had a sense of the beautiful, a gracious refinement about him, which the severest critics of his policies would not deny him, and from him this quality rubbed off to others. His fastidiousness made those around him a little less sloppy, what his eye fell on became a little more clean and orderly. His mind was sensitive as anyone's to the misery of the people. Their sorrows oppressed him as much as them, and even if his remedies were not always effective he thought about them constantly. But he also found time to spare for other things, and because of him others learnt to spare it too; for the theatre and music, for painting and sculpture, for letters and dancing and for the delightful spirit of the tribes, for animals and mountains and for the change of seasons in his garden whence the roses came, which he is known to have tended with personal care. Among his friends he counted Yehudi Menuhin and Le Corbusier, the Roerichs—the father, the son and Devika Rani—and many young Indian artists and artistes for whom his association with them was encouragement; his own admiration extended beyond political philosophers to Lindbergh, Einstein and Schweitzer. But with him, in fact, two or three years before his death, this breadth of sympathy disappeared from our public life.

'Will it return with Indira Gandhi as PM? It could, more with her than with anyone else who could have become Prime Minister. To a great deal she must have imbibed from the

enlightening influence of her father, she adds the inevitable beauty of the feminine touch and many will look forward to more than merely the symbolic return on the rose . . . .”

Nehru was often criticized and sometimes harshly, when he was Prime Minister as well as after his death ; in this book too some of the comments are severe. He was never criticised by any responsible critic for failing to solve what no man could have solved within the span of one life ; if he had been ten times more effective than he was he would have left a great part of India economically poor and socially backward. Where his critics are right is that he did not always take up first things first, and even when he did he gave, or his temperament compelled him to give, the wrong slant to his remedies. The visionary in him mixed up his priorities, his flights of imagination led him astray. In certain matters he was amazingly meticulous about detail. In his personal life, for example, and sometimes in quite impersonal matters : in August 1948, when it was still a subject of conjecture whether a few years hence there would be an India or a nation for him to preside over, he took close interest in the orchestration of the national anthem and rejected a scheme built around what was till then the greatest national song, *Vande Matram*, because it would not be suitable for presentation abroad. But more often he was so wrapped up in the monumental design that he forgot to ask himself whether the structure of clay which the country still was would be able to bear the weight.

And yet no man except Nehru could have made it possible that twenty years after the greatest Englishman of the century, Sir Winston Churchill, had prophesied doom for “men of straw, of whom in a few years no trace will remain” and for India a fate of “haphazard fragmentation”, there should still be an India to choose a Prime Minister, that it should turn to Nehru’s daughter because there is still magic in that name, that twice after Nehru’s death the transition to a new leader should be a marvel of smoothness for which there are no parallels among the newer countries of the world, that there should be an India that this book is about, the same India which he inherited in 1947 but by his works made more comprehensible and in greater depth ; that when people sit down to build new policies for an India in transition, the groundwork of their choice should

still be the same that he had shaped, in some cases as long as twenty years ago, in some cases even earlier.

## CHAPTER 18

### *SOME MONTHS OF PROMISE*

#### LOOKING FOR A LEADER

IN THE summer of 1964 most people would have found it difficult to imagine that the election of Lal Bahadur Shastri as Prime Minister would mark a departure in Indian affairs. The man did not suggest it, nor did the times; the combination gave no reason for hope. In any case slothful pessimism had become the accepted habit; it was too much of an effort to entertain hope.

Here was no dashing young man on a white charger, as a ton of legend and a few ounces of fact had made Nehru in the public mind before he became Prime Minister; nor was he, as Nehru was, an innovator of ideas. On the contrary, here was an embarrassingly plain Prime Minister, humble to a fault, so innocent of all outward signs of the Leader that no one thought he would have the thrust to break out of the prevailing gloom. No image-building had embroidered the plain facts about Shastri. His simplicity might have had a dramatic appeal, as Nehru's had when he was simple, in the days of the freedom movement, if there had been stories about him, as there were about Nehru, about a glamorously rich childhood. The only thing known about Shastri's childhood was that his schooling was nearly cut short when a small shop his father used to run in a village went on the rocks; that often he did not have money for the boat to take him across the river to school, and he had to swim his way through, his books tied on his head.

His more recent career also had not endowed him with any quality of magic. In the politics of his home state, Uttar Pradesh, he was known, to the extent that he was known at all, as a quiet, unambitious person, someone who could be depended upon but would never shine. By 1950 he had moved up by slow stages to become the General Secretary of the all-India Congress organization, with wide-ranging functions which he performed quietly, discreetly, competently and—a reputation

which was to stand him in good stead later—honestly. The only dramatic moment in his career came towards the end of 1956 when, as Union Minister of Railways, he accepted responsibility, which he need not have, for a railway accident and resigned; the party fashion then was to cling to office till the last possible moment. The gesture surprised the country and caught its imagination; it also paved the way, which was probably the purpose, for Shastri to become the chief organizer of the Congress campaign for the 1957 general elections, his most important assignment till then. Upon the death of Pandit Pant, the tallest man—except Nehru—among politicians from U.P., Shastri became Minister of Home Affairs. But he was hedged in by the eminence of Nehru on the one hand and on the other by every one seeing in him a small successor to a much bigger man. As Minister without Portfolio he had succeeded, only a few months before Nehru's death, in bringing to an end a dangerous agitation in Kashmir. But the acclaim he won was soon to turn into hoarse laughter from the shadows because of unpredictable twists in the affairs of Kashmir.<sup>1</sup>

A man descended from such beginnings, it was thought, would never take new or daring decisions or put the stamp of his leadership upon his inheritance. At best he would be honestly obedient to the memory of Nehru and would faithfully tread the long line of examples Nehru had set. If things remained more or less normal in and around India, he might even try to consolidate his patrimony. But enriching it was not something to be expected of him. He might even be able to evolve a team, which Nehru could not, and be sufficiently willing to benefit from the advice of colleagues so that with their help he could hold the country and party together. But his contribution would never be a new kind of charism. Had not Kamaraj confirmed this by explaining that Nehru had been succeeded by many persons, not one?

And by as much as many people had put him in office, would Shastri not become a prisoner in their hands? He was surrounded and supported by people more assertive than he. By the big, silent Kamaraj, who had built up a formidable reputation for himself and now loomed over Shastri even larger than life-

<sup>1</sup> See pp 289-95.

size. By the trio who constituted the "Syndicate", and by those who were rapidly climbing on to its wagon. By Chavan, who not only held the key portfolio of Defence but in the succession tussle with Desai had tipped the balance in Shastri's favour at a critical moment. By the Finance Minister, T. T. Krishnamachari, whose enormous ego was matched by his ability and the fact that he was the only technocrat in a team of dusty politicians.

Behind and all around the Prime Minister, engaging him in a daily confrontation would be Parliament; the Opposition in it, like the Buddhists in Saigon, had discovered its power and was not going to miss any opportunity of making it felt. If the Congress Party in Parliament had been a united body, Shastri would have had very little to fear; its majority over the Opposition was, in numbers, impregnable. But it was far from united; to the many other groups already existing in it, two more or the recently deprived had been added—on the Right the followers of Morarji Desai and on the Left the Menon-Malaviya combine which was waiting for an opportunity to wash the stains it had gathered. Supported by factions within the Congress, the Opposition would be able and willing to make any hot issue hotter still for the government. Unfortunately for Shastri hot issues were going to multiply everyday, making his first twelve months in office a calendar of woes:

Consider the first month, June. Morarji Desai declined to join the Cabinet on any but his own terms, making the latest rift in the Congress still wider. He was offered a rank next only to the Prime Minister and Nanda who acted as Prime Minister upon Nehru's death. But he would have nothing less than his former position as number two before he came out under the Kamaraj plan. To be number three he found "not consistent with my self-respect".

At the end of June Shastri, already suspected to be a mild case of heart, suffered an attack which caused more misgivings the more it was covered up as "indisposition". Probably it was only another mild attack. But it confined him to bed for almost a month and did nothing to allay the feeling, already widespread, that India's reins were in weak hands.

*July*: The Minister of Community Development, S. K. Dey, predicted food riots which would "imperil the democratic base

Shastri to severe pressure from within and outside his party that India should give up the policy of nuclear abstention and make the bomb, which everyone knew she could do if she wanted to. More immediately ominous was the fall of Khrushchev and some hints by his successor, Brezhnev, that a thaw in the Sino-Soviet cold war might follow. If the thaw developed India would lose one source of support against China; domestic Communism would become united and stronger; the opposite thaw, in Soviet-American relations, which had made life easier for the non-aligned countries, would go into reverse.

*November:* Food riots broke out in Kerala, with the Opposition parties taking full advantage of the genuine discontent and distress among the people. Within the Congress a revolt broke out against the Shastri Government, especially against the Home Minister Nanda's vigorous investigation of corrupt practices and raids on some wealthy business houses organized by the Finance Minister. The party bosses of the eastern States, led by the strong man of the West Bengal Congress, Atulya Ghosh (a member of the syndicate), made their rebellion more vocal and New Delhi had to start backing down soon afterwards.

*December:* A convention of the Left Communist party in Calcutta gave rise to a strong suspicion that organized disruption of public life had been adopted as the party line. Nanda made a countrywide swoop in which about 700 Left Communists were arrested.

*January:* On the fifteenth anniversary of the Indian Constitution, January 26, Nanda decided, without any psychological preparation in the country, to announce for Hindi the status provided for it in the Constitution. Strong reaction erupted in non-Hindi areas but in Madras assumed unparalleled intensity, masterfully guided by the secessionist Tamil Party, the D.M.K. On January 27, two D.M.K. men burnt themselves to death, causing a huge conflagration in the next two days.

*February:* Rioting broke out in many parts of Madras, in which nineteen persons were killed, all of them in police firing on February 10, and another 20 two days later. Railway property worth more than \$ 2 million was destroyed. On February 11, in a last-minute effort to pacify Tamilians, Shastri promised in a broadcast that legal status would be given to informal assurances by Nehru to non-Hindi areas that Hindi would not

be made the official language without the prior consent of all States and English would be retained indefinitely as the associate official language. But whatever impact his announcement might have had was nullified by the simultaneous announcement of their resignations by two Tamil members of his Ministry, the Food Minister, C. Subramaniam, and the Petroleum Minister, O. P. Alagesan. The southern States joined up in an anti-Hindi front and their Chief Ministers decided to confer on how to co-ordinate their opposition to Hindi.

On the other hand, Shastri found on his hands a rebellion against his concessions to English by Members of Parliament drawn from nearly all States except the southern. About 100 Congress MPs joined hands to protest against the decision to amend existing laws about the official language and to give legal status to Nehru's assurances. Others raised the wholly impracticable demands that examinations for recruitment to Central Services should be conducted in all regional languages or a quota of recruits from each language area fixed, which would have made selection by merit impossible.

On February 6 the best known "strong man" of provincial Congress politics, the Chief Minister with the longest list of allegations of misuse of power against him, Pratap Singh Kairon, now out of office but still a storm centre of political controversy in Punjab, was shot dead by a gunman on a highway just twenty miles out of Delhi. Since Gandhi was shot in 1948, this was the first suspected case of the politics of the bullet.

*March:* The Left Communists emerged as the strongest single party in elections in Kerala. They took 40 seats, 28 for candidates still in prison under the Defence of India Rules. The Right Communists who took only two seats were routed. The main Congress party took 36 seats and the breakaway splinter another 24. Unsplit, the Congress would have had a sizable majority over the combined Communist strength: 60 seats against 42, 46 per cent votes against 27 per cent. But as they were the results tarished the Congress reputation still further and gave the morale of the Left Communists a powerful boost.

Within the Congress this made critics of the Government, especially the Left faction, intensely more vocal. In the last



week of March the latter mounted a strong attack on the Finance Minister for being, as they alleged, "too kind of foreign capital". Mrs Vijayalakshmi Pandit, still possessed of considerable political glamour as Nehru's sister, former ambassador in many countries and President of the General Assembly, flayed the Shastri leadership on the floor of Parliament. Next day Krishna Menon took over from where she had left and made his bitterest speech since he was pushed out of Government. These two speeches between them left the country wondering whether the Shastri Government was about to fall.

*April:* At this stage President Johnson, showing the maximum heavy-handedness and ill-temper and the minimum understanding of the Indian scene, heaped upon Shastri a most unexpected humiliation: Shastri's visit to the United States, to which everyone knew he was looking forward with keen anticipation, was cancelled right in the midst of the well-publicised preparations for it. This set in motion a whole sequence in prospect just when there was the best chance in years that relations between the two countries would discover some durable foundations. At the time Shastri came to power there was a general expectation that India's relations with the West, especially with the United States, would improve. In fact, in the second half of 1965, they became as bad as at any time under the Nehru-Menon combination. A great many factors contributed to the almost wilful display of diplomatic bad manners by both sides. But the starting point was this thoughtless action by Johnson which bruised the feelings of a small and sensitive man still unsure of himself and very susceptible even to imaginary insults; this brush-off by an all-powerful President was a very real insult in the eyes of all Indians, including Shastri's.

But the last month of Shastri's first year was the worst. It swept out of his reach two political objectives which were close to his heart: better relations with Pakistan and easing of tensions in Kashmir. The importance of the latter impressed itself upon him during his experience in Kashmir early in 1964. He had the chance to see then that a fragile situation was being made explosive by the continued imprisonment of Sheikh Abdullah, and that the Government in Srinagar had little contact with the people. Improving relations with Pakistan had a natural prio-

city for him: it fitted in with his concern about problems nearer home, and with his anxiety about the state of the economy. He was aware of the risk he would run in pursuing these two objectives; nothing would more quickly expose him to the charge that he was weak. If he needed any reminder of the risk he did not have to wait for it.

He also saw clearly that New Delhi's equations with Srinagar and Rawalpindi were interdependent. In a conversation with this author soon after his return from Kashmir, he said that a restless Kashmir would always impinge upon Indo-Pakistan relations, while continued hostility between these two countries would always produce unhealthy reactions in Kashmir. On the other hand, if one equation improved the other also would respond. When he became Prime Minister he gave equal priority to the two and took up both at once.

Fortunately for him he struck, or so it appeared at that time, a responsive chord in both situations. Since his release Sheikh Abdullah had been making himself a three-way bridge between the moderate elements in Kashmir, in the rest of India and in Pakistan. His release in April and visit to Pakistan in the third week of May—Shastri had a hand in arranging both—were a gamble that was paying off. Until he had to rush back to India upon Nehru's death, Abdullah repeatedly said in Pakistan that the salvation of the people of Kashmir lay in permanent friendship between India and Pakistan, and no solution would work which weakened the secular character of India. He annoyed and disappointed the extremists in Pakistan, whose mouthpiece, *Dawn*, accused him of shifting his stand from a solution of the Kashmir dispute to constructing friendship between India and Pakistan. But he went ahead regardless. He worked for an early meeting between Ayub and Nehru and was hopeful of its taking place by the end of June.

The fear that with Nehru's death Abdullah would change disappeared soon. Early meetings between him and Shastri took place and on June 11 Abdullah said the talks were going well. There was the fear, to which Abdullah gave private expression, that a new Prime Minister and one only of Shastri's stature may not be able to grapple with extremist opinion in India, as Nehru could or might have. But he was soon convinced of Shastri's own intentions, and if events had not taken

the unhappy turn they did he would have had reason to be convinced of Shastri's ability ultimately to withstand the pressures of extreme opinion.

Shastri's early contacts with Pakistan were also very hopeful. Ayub and even Bhutto counselled moderation in their country. The stormy Foreign Minister of Pakistan, later a poisonous thorn in India's side, appealed to his country's politicians on June 4, two days after Shastri's election, to observe a moratorium on Indo-Pakistan debate until after a meeting between Ayub and Shastri. "Pakistan is trying to open up new avenues of peace and unity with India", he said. Ayub more than confirmed the sentiment and Shastri more than reciprocated. Although he knew that Indians who were hankering after a strong leader were again turning their eyes towards Morarji Desai, Shastri had a cordial exchange of messages with Ayub, each outdoing the other in promising maximum efforts to end all mutual problems. Shastri repeatedly expressed himself highly impressed by the statements of Ayub. Illness prevented him from going to London in July for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, at which there would have been substantial opportunity for reaching informal understandings. But he sent Ayub a letter suggesting an early meeting.

In Ayub's talks with India's representative, Krishnamachari, it was agreed that the Home Ministers of the two countries should meet very soon and prepare the ground for a summit meeting. Because of maladroit handling of well-established procedures, a reference to Indo-Pakistan problems, though not directly to Kashmir, appeared in the conference communique. This was contrary to normal practice and there was a howl of protest in India; Shastri's critics seized upon it as the first fruit of his weakness. But Shastri did not allow himself to be swept off his feet and in October, on his way back from the Cairo conference of the non-aligned countries, he stopped off in Karachi for a meeting with Ayub which by all accounts went off very well. Shastri made repeated references to this upon his return to India.

But optimism took a plunge in the course of December, the half-way mark in Shastri's first year in office. Events within Kashmir had been getting steadily more serious since the end of the summer. The Government of Sadiq had given Kashmir

its first clean, liberal and relatively efficient administration since the early 'fifties, when absolute power had so corrupted Abdullah that he and his government went berserk. But Sadiq was no manipulator of political forces. His majority in the faction-ridden state Assembly was unstable and under attack from Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, who was skilful, ruthless, restless out of office and anxious to oust the Government of Sadiq. He threatened a vote of no-confidence against Sadiq in the Assembly, and he could have pulled it off if allowed. This would have exposed New Delhi to a constitutional quandary.

It was doubtful in the first place whether Ghulam Mohammed could establish a stable majority government as easily as he could dislodge Sadiq. In the latter attempt he would have had the support of the pro-Abdullah members but not in the former. Even if he had succeeded, his government in the second place would only have represented a political clique in the Assembly, not the preferences of the people; as a person Ghulam Mohammed was as unpopular with those who favour India as with those who do not. Faced with such instability in any other State, New Delhi can have recourse to certain provisions in the Constitution under which the President can directly take over the State's administration for an indefinite period. But these provisions did not at that time extend to Kashmir because of the special status of semi-autonomy which that State enjoyed. Therefore, two steps had to be taken to close the lacuna. The Kashmir Government, at its own level, arrested Ghulam Mohammed, in September 1964, a decision regretted only by the victim's own henchmen and by no one else, though use of the Defence of India Rules for this purpose was deplored by many. The Government of India amended the Constitution in December and took the power to invoke President's rule in Kashmir also. This Pakistan regarded as one more step in India's absorption of Kashmir and it lodged a strong protest; equally strongly India rejected the protest.

India and Pakistan are, paradoxically, equally right in their standpoint. Whatever the ultimate future of Kashmir, so long as it remains a part of India, New Delhi is as responsible for as for any other state's stability and safety. It should have same powers, therefore, to discharge this responsibility as in respect of other States. If duly constituted govern-

ment became impossible in Kashmir for any reason whatever, New Delhi could not stand aside with folded arms and plead that it was helpless. But this argument obviously could not have any appeal for Pakistan, where the Indian move was seen as eliminating one more lever which elements in Kashmir in favour of Pakistan could have used. After the storm which had hit Kashmir at the beginning of the year, there must have been hopes in Pakistan that the internal situation in Kashmir would force India one day to change her stand. But the hope must have diminished when New Delhi armed itself with this further power in Kashmir. With the hope, the incipient trust between Shastri and Ayub also vanished. Thereafter it became more and more likely that a trial of arms would follow. It did in the spring.

Trust between Shastri and Abdullah also declined by parallel stages. Although causes are difficult to trace in the complex personality of Abdullah, some of them are too obvious to be missed. From his own earlier stand, that as relations between New Delhi and Rawalpindi improved so would those between Srinagar and New Delhi, it followed as an inevitable converse that there should be strain between Abdullah and Shastri now that tension was rising between New Delhi and Rawalpindi. Secondly, pressures within the Valley were forcing Abdullah to stop being a moderate. He had to maintain his position against the more vocal pro-Pakistan Kashmiris who were not yet reconciled to India; this he could only do by showing that he could show the fist as the best among them. He could also complain that there were provocations from India, by the same forces in fact whom he had blamed in 1953 for his *volte face*. Even before Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed started contributing his own brand of complications in Kashmir, the demand was being made in New Delhi by the spokesmen of staunch Hindu opinion that the distinct status granted to Kashmir in the Constitution be abolished and the whole process ended which since independence had prevented the full integration of Kashmir with the rest of India. A fourth reason might well be what many people have always suspected in India, that if you scratch Abdullah you will find an anti-Indian. This last view would regard the first three reasons as only pretexts for Abdullah to bring to the surface what sooner or later he would have in

any case.

Whatever the causes, the course of events had something inexorable about it. From the beginning of the winter of 1965 Abdullah began to change the whole temper of his propaganda in Kashmir. He made a "struggle" against India a constant theme of his speeches and very soon made himself a security risk. In the spring of 1965 he began to press for a passport to travel abroad. Propaganda in other countries was suspected to be his real purpose though the immediate reason he gave for applying for a passport was pilgrimage to the Hedjaz. Against the grain of public opinion and the advice of many colleagues, Shastri allowed him to get a passport—to refuse one for the pilgrimage might have been difficult in any case but he was allowed to go to other countries also—even though, as became publicly known a little later, he had prevaricated in describing his nationality. Regulations require the applicant to state that he is Indian if he is going out on an Indian passport. Abdullah described himself variously as a citizen of the State of Jammu and Kashmir or simply as "a Kashmiri Muslim"; never as an Indian.

For a time the implications passed unnoticed by the public. But they became added fuel when Sheikh Abdullah met Chou En-lai in Algiers early in April. Abdullah could not have found a surer way of irritating public opinion in India and embarrassing anyone responsible, and above all Shastri, for giving him a passport. Whether the meeting was treason as many people in India alleged, is not the point; nor whether the initiative for it came from Chou-En-lai or Abdullah. But it made him thoroughly unacceptable even to those Indians or many among them who believed that Abdullah's help should be taken in creating political stability in Kashmir.

What followed made Abdullah's first offence seem far from inadvertent. He accepted an invitation to go to China, and Pakistan turned the knife in Indian wounds by offering to give Abdullah a passport for China, should India deny him one. On April 4, within three days of Abdullah's meeting with Chou En-lai, Shastri found himself in the midst of a hot debate in the Executive Committee of the Congress Party in Parliament. He and his Foreign Minister had to promise that Abdullah would not be allowed to go to China, though how

they would prevent him was far from clear. Next day India invalidated Abdullah's passport for all places except the Hedjaz though this also was like closing the stable after the horse had bolted. But in the next few weeks it turned out that Abdullah himself was not over anxious to burn all his boats, as he would have if he had gone to China. He decided to return to India instead. But his role as a bridge-builder and as a statesman potentially of sub-continental dimensions had been destroyed by an act of extreme indiscretion. When he returned to India on May 8, he was arrested at New Delhi's airport.

The arrest was an act of dubious merit, because Abdullah had until then done nothing which could be described as illegal; it was probably more a gesture of Shastri's compliance with a strong public sentiment. But it certainly put an end, at least for some time, to any initiatives Shastri might have had in mind for resolving some of the domestic tensions in Kashmir. It is fortunate for India that the resentment in Kashmir was not as violently expressed as it might have been. Otherwise, in the context of the events which followed in August and September, the consequences might have been dangerous indeed.

Pakistan, by now openly a disciple of China, even more conspicuously gave up all hope of getting anything out of negotiations with India, and began a reckless pursuit of other means—and quickly showed how well it had learnt the tactics of China. In the barren wastes of the Rann of Kutch, a marshy desert between Sind province of Pakistan and the Indian district of Kutch, it staged an exact duplicate in miniature of the drama enacted by the Chinese in Ladakh. Only the results were different, because Pakistan overlooked the basic fact that it was not China.

Most of the border between the Sind province of Pakistan and the Indian State of Gujarat, of which Kutch is the northern border district, had been clearly demarcated before independence and was mutually accepted by India and Pakistan. But there was a short disputed stretch, close to the Arabian Sea, skirted by a creek which floods this low-lying area at high tide, converting it into a seasonal sea and a permanent marsh—and there has been obstinate disagreement

between the two countries whether this area is marsh or sea. India's claim is that it is marsh and the whole of it part of a princely state which acceded to India and was merged with Gujarat. Pakistan claims that this is an inland sea, lying between two countries and according to the laws of international frontiers, half of it must belong to Pakistan. It is not disputed by Pakistan that before independence the Rann was part of the State of Kutch which acceded to India. But it maintains that at that time the border between Kutch and Sind was a domestic one, the rules of international frontiers did not apply to it. Now they do.

The dispute dragged on for a number of years, occasionally becoming violent, as in 1956. But in 1959 and 1960 India and Pakistan agreed that further data would be collected and further talks held, and if no agreement could be reached a tribunal would be set up. More specially it was agreed in 1960 that "On this frontier the *de facto* border is generally known to the security forces of both sides and to the local populations. In case of disputes arising in any sector the *status quo* will be maintained by the local commanders". India and Pakistan were subsequently to blame each other for there being no talks after 1960. But the fact probably is that neither side attached sufficient importance to this area to take up the matter in earnest; it became one of those unresolved border disputes between India and Pakistan which from time to time create a nuisance but have never been put out of the way.

In January 1965 an Indian patrol party found that the Pakistanis had intruded a mile and a half into Indian territory and built a track across it, connecting two posts on their side of the border; the first parallel with Aksai Chin had thus been struck. Protests were made to Pakistan, infructuous talks were held, but in March the Pakistani intrusion was found to have grown. On April 9 troops of the regular Pakistan army equipped with 25-pounder guns attacked a new post which India had set up on its side. Thirty-four Pakistanis were killed in the attack but the Indian post fell. India decided on this date to transfer protection of this frontier from the police to the army. The first steps in escalation had been firmly taken. The Indian post lost to Pakistan was recaptured but on April



11 Pakistan launched another and a bigger attack. Simultaneously it demanded now not only a settlement of the border but 3,500 square miles of Indian territory. This was the second parallel with Aksai Chin.

But in the meantime, the suspicion grew in Delhi that the attack on Kutch was probably a feint for a bigger adventure elsewhere. India offered immediate talks but there was no response. On April 15, after some more shelling of opposing positions, Pakistan offered and India accepted a cease-fire to be followed by talks. Shastri immediately ran into hostility in Parliament, where members objected to talks while Pakistan remained in occupation of the Indian territory it has captured. On April 19 Shastri made it clear that Pakistan would have to vacate this territory. Pakistan took this to be a pre-condition for talks and withdrew its offer of negotiation. Next-day India clarified that what it had said was not a pre-condition but a demand that India would make in the negotiations. Subsequent Pakistani action implied that the offer had lapsed, because on April 22 shelling was resumed and on April 24 a major attack launched on a wide area. Pakistan stepped up the scale of the fighting by using American tanks and at the same time ordered general mobilization. In India the demand for strong action grew. Shastri declined to be drawn into a rigid military commitment on a large scale in an unfavourable area but put the armed forces on the alert and assured Parliament: "We will defend with all the strength at our command."

Pakistani attacks went up to brigade level, supported by tanks. Third party pleas for negotiations now began to be addressed to India but Shastri refused talks so long as the attacks continued. A highly emotional debate took place in Parliament on April 28 in which Shastri, responding to his own feelings as well as of the House, declared: "If Pakistan continues to discard reason and persists in its aggressive activities, our army will defend the country and it will decide its own strategy and the employment of its manpower and equipment in the manner it deems best." He said it would depend entirely upon Pakistan now whether the present fighting would escalate into war. Thunder in Pakistan also mounted and on May 1 President Ayub gave the warning that if

India chose to fight on "ground of its choice," there would be "a general and total war".

In this atmosphere any talk of peace was most unpopular with many members of Parliament. On April 29 Opposition MPs demanded a contradiction from Shastri of rumours of an impending truce on "dishonourable terms". There were angry noises, and not only on the Opposition benches, when the government said it would not make a statement the same day but the next. On April 30 Shastri confirmed peace moves by Wilson, was harshly accused by the Opposition of appeasement, even a senior Congress member complained of "ways of Munich", and Shastri retorted in one of his rare outbursts of temper, that "patriotism is not the monopoly of a handful of members on the other side. We also know what the self-respect of our country demands and we are determined to do our duty". But Congress opinion continued to harden against a cease-fire, and rumour cropped up all over New Delhi that there were differences in the Cabinet and that the Defence Minister had threatened to resign. Congress party leaders demanded that the government "restore India's image", by which it was obviously meant that an armed retort be given to Pakistan at a place of India's choosing.

Shastri was faced with a very difficult choice: India's temper pointed one way, its interests another. In explaining the issues, the Military Correspondent of *The Statesman*, at that time the most influential writer on this subject in the country, wrote about the military situation and Wilson's peace efforts: "In this peace effort President Ayub will be hampered by the mood into which he has urged his people and the militant mood of his forces; a factor which is always a difficult one for a military dictator. Mr. Shastri will be hampered by the two heavy burdens he has to carry from the very beginning, a factious party and vociferous debates that so often cloud sane thinking.

"Those who think about the problem in India seem to be divided into three groups. The first group feels armed conflict must be avoided at any cost for the good of both nations. A second, and possibly the largest group feels that the armed forces should stage an incident along the border at a time and place of their own choosing, thus getting even with Pak-

istan. They insist, however, that the incident should be localized, and not allowed to grow into a war. The third group and possibly the smallest is for a showdown with Pakistan whatever the cost or consequences might be. The most muddled thinkers are group two. It is quite clear now that any localized retaliation, which must be sizeable to make an impact, will inexorably escalate into what group three considers to be the right answer.... It has been said that the U.N. would stop any conflict in two weeks. A more unrealistic statement has seldom been made. Resolutions have never stopped hostilities and the United Nations has no police force with which to enforce its decisions. Therefore a quick end to the conflict is not possible and when conventional reserves start to run out the existing mutual hatred may mean guerilla gangs marauding at will. Any mediation would, of course, lay down certain conditions including possibly a plebiscite in Kashmir, while any intervention if China intruded would certainly make this a pre-condition. The fate of the minorities in both countries requires no emphasis.... Both India and Pakistan ought to take thought before they push their countries into something the results of which have not been fully evaluated by either side. This is the military view and one can only hope it coincides with the political one."

At the level of the Prime Minister, the two views coincided and ultimately they were to prevail over the hot-heads in the party. Wilson was trying in the background to get the two countries to agree to a three-point plan. He wanted both sides to withdraw their troops to the positions they held before the fighting began; to open direct negotiations for a settlement, and if these did not succeed, to accept the intervention of a tribunal. These terms were not different from what Pakistan had once offered, in the middle of April. But with success on the ground its ambitions grew, and on May 4 Pakistan announced that a cease-fire and restoration of the *status quo ante* were not acceptable. If a tribunal was set up it must decide not only the disputed stretch in Kutch but the whole Western frontier, which would clearly involve it in the Kashmir dispute. In other words a third-party decision about Kashmir which Pakistan could not get out of the United Nations it was now trying to out of the skirmish in Kutch. On May 5, Shastri

went into a flurry of meetings with his party, with the Cabinet, with the Opposition Parties and by the end of the day he made it known that India would accept the proposals by Wilson. He also agreed that whether a formal cease-fire was announced or not, India would give instructions to the troops not to open fire unless fired upon. The undeclared cease-fire dragged on for weeks but at the end of June a formal agreement was announced by both sides—not on Pakistan's terms but on Wilson's and Shastri's.

The facts, in retrospect, show that Pakistan's adventure had misfired. But no one who lived through those days could fail to see what a bonus Pakistan got out of a limited investment in military provocation. It exposed Shastri to a fearful choice of accepting battle on grounds of Pakistan's choosing (a look at the map shows how unfavourable they were for India) or suffer being shaken by bad temper in his party. Shastri's cool judgment compelled him to the latter course but there were moments when it appeared that he was about to be trapped. This added a telling detail to the general picture of India as it looked in 1965, a country which had only to be given a good shake for bits and pieces of it to fall into the lap of others, or for it to blunder into suicidal error. Even while doing no more than abide by a five-year old agreement between the two countries, he had constantly to assure Indian opinion that he was not selling the country's honour, that "there will be no appeasement on fundamentals". He had to deny a cease-fire when there was one in existence, and make futile responses to Wilson's approaches.

On June 5, two days before Shastri left for London for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference, it was officially stated in New Delhi that in the absence of any prior agreement on a cease-fire and the restoration of the *status quo ante*, Shastri would not be prepared to talk to Ayub while both were in London. It was obvious to everyone that there would be an encounter, and there was; but public emotions had to be satisfied first. In the middle of June there was a fresh clash in Kutch. But in spite of that Shastri and Ayub met for talks which Shastri later described as "a warm and friendly meeting". The talks were substantive for all the informality with which they were arranged. Yet on returning to Delhi

Shastri still had to maintain that they had nothing to do with Kutch. This meeting was the only thing of any consequence which happened between the second week of June, when Wilson's mediation was still floundering, and at the end of the month when its success was announced. That the informal meeting had nothing to do with it is very hard to believe; much more likely is it that Shastri's unsure leadership prevented him from confirming it. A man who did not wish to be unnecessarily aggressive was made to look weak when in fact he was firm.

In less than six months all this was to change. Not only Shastri was to begin to seem the man he was but India a country that ought to be taken note of. Whether others believed in the transformation or not, most Indians did, and that is what most matters. India has never been weaker than when it has convinced itself that it is weak, as in the spring of 1965 it had. Its recovery in the following autumn was by no means complete; far from it. But more Indians were convinced than at any time since the middle 'fifties that something good had happened to them and they needed only to consolidate and expand it. This "good" of course was the September War with Pakistan in which India recovered most of the self-confidence it had lost in 1962.<sup>1</sup> Therefore by the easy tracing of a causal connection between what precedes and what follows it has been generally assumed, at any rate in India, that it was only the war which enabled Shastri and India to turn a fateful corner. But this view probably oversimplifies the post-Nehru period; a better appraisal of India in 1965 requires a closer look at the first year of Shastri to see what he had set right, or was bidding fair to set right even before the September war presented him with his greatest challenge and opportunity.

Shastri had been in office only for a few days when the country sensed a change for the better in one important respect, in the standards of personal conduct in public life. The standards Nehru prescribed for himself were impeccable, and he lived up to them more scrupulously than others would have in his place. But he had a tendency to overlook lower

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 317-27.

standards, howsoever low, in those whom he gave his personal backing because he thought them to be dynamic men even if of tainted reputation. The best known among them were Pratap Singh Kairon and Biju Patnaik. Both came to conspicuous grief under Shastri, the former immediately and directly, the latter a little later and indirectly.

An inquiry reluctantly instituted by Nehru into the affairs of the Kairon family came up with a report soon after Nehru's death which left discretion a great deal of room either way. Considering the past record of Nehru's weakness for him many people judged that Nehru would have used his discretion in favour of Kairon. Shastri was not at all inclined to. He felt that whatever the legal strength in the charges against Kairon, he was too widely suspected to have committed or condoned unworthy deeds to remain fit for the high office of Chief Minister of his State. The fact that Kairon still had a large majority in the Congress party in the Punjab Legislature mattered very little; that the Kairon image in public life was tainted mattered more. Therefore Shastri used every device he knew to persuade Kairon to resign, and he succeeded.

Patnaik had already gone under the Kamaraj plan. Shastri took care to see that his protégé went also. The pace of action was slow and disappointed many people, so did the follow-up to Kairon's resignation. But it would be wrong to judge Shastri too harshly in this respect. He had to operate within the democratic framework, and Kairon and Patnaik were pastmasters at keeping up their majorities in the State legislatures by fair means or foul. They were examples of how deadly a combination of the democratic apparatus and dictatorial spirit could be in the hands of a demagogue. Therefore Shastri had to proceed with care; but proceed he did until he deflated corruption as an issue of public debate.

The healing touch he administered in Kashmir in January was felt in June in Nagaland, where a cease-fire was declared and peace restored after ten years of civil warfare. In resolving the language crisis he faced early in 1965 he demonstrated the technique he was to use often, of exposing the two extremes on any issue to each other's virulence until a consensus more in harmony with his own moderation appeared. At times this was to look like vacillation and absence of policy.

But the end product nearly always served the general interest. In the first few months of 1965 he did little to moderate the raging controversy over the status of Hindi. But by the beginning of the summer the "Hindi Now" and "Hindi Never" lobbies had been made to realize that neither of them was going to have everything its way: the middle way was thus cleared for policy. Most of its ingredients emerged from the clash of opposites. Shastri and a few others then sat together to give a shape to it which brought about a wide and wise consensus. Action upon it was unfortunately slow. This was often a failing in Shastri, but in extenuation it should be said that the circumstances he faced till the time of his death made it desirable that controversial policies should be held in abeyance.

In July Shastri had to face a major crisis in the Congress, at the A.I.C.C. meeting in Bangalore. But before the session ended it had become the scene of Shastri's triumph, not defeat; and a most unacrimonious triumph it was, fully in keeping with the temper of the man. The biggest question at this session was who should be elected party President for the next two years. The issue might not have been important at other times, but in the summer of 1965 it was. Whoever was elected now would have a big hand in selecting Congress candidates for the 1967 elections, who in turn would be choosing the next Prime Minister. In 1958 the Congress had decided that no one should hold any party office for more than one term in succession. This would have ruled out Kamaraj as President, and the strongest candidate left would have been Morarji Desai, whose election would have meant that Shastri would cease to be Prime Minister in 1967. Congress leaders who had been largely responsible for Kamaraj's election in 1963 and Shastri's in 1964 wanted the ban to be waived; "over my dead body", declared Morarji Desai. There were all the signs of a major split as Desai accused the leadership of "bossism", insisted nothing had happened for the Congress to reverse a ban it had imposed after seldom debate, and if the party was in fact "so devoid of leadership", then it would be better to disband the organization.

Shastri kept himself in the background, let Desai face the growing fact that he was in a minority, and then spared him

defeat and the party a split by making an appeal at the psychological moment for the uncontested election of Kamaraj. It is probable that Kamaraj would have come in in any case; Desai was never the man to get a majority behind him. But the fact that Shastri led him by the hand contributed not a little to correcting the imbalance of the preceding summer between the offices of the Congress President and Prime Minister. Shastri was no longer a man in miniature standing beside Kamaraj; he became the senior partner and would have been, if death had spared him, the greater attraction at future sessions of the party.

Shastri's stamp is even more clearly seen in the interesting shifts in India's economic thinking since Nehru's death. At his first press conference after a election as party leader Shastri was asked what he thought was the main problem before him. Without a moment's hesitation came the answer: "prices". After that he never ceased to give prices and production the priority they deserve, displacing abstract notions or ideological preference. The growing pragmatism seen in India's economic policy-making in the past three years is his contribution, though even Nehru's thinking had become less ideologically oriented in his closing years. Some of Shastri's propositions also had an ideological flavour. State trading in foodgrains, announced as intention just before he fell ill in June 1964, was one; another the desire he expressed in October that the public sector should be extended to the consumer goods industry. But there was less ideology in either and more of his instinctive appreciation of a critical flaw in planning so far, that by leaving the market free for profiteering it had failed to put the lid on the prices of necessities. State trading was also a means to the same end; as the backstop of rationing, the main device for protecting the urban consumer against high prices or scarcity of food.

The scale of his thinking was not small, as at one time it was feared it might be. After initial opposition to a large plan, he came round to the figure favoured by the Planning Commission. But within the Plan he wanted a higher priority for necessities and for projects which would yield results more quickly. Hence the growing emphasis, almost vehement towards the end of his life, that agriculture must be given the highest priority and within it schemes which would become quickly



productive. In this respect there is fascination in the contrast between the Congress sessions at Bhubaneshwar and Durgapur, the former the last before Nehru's death, the latter the first after Shastri became Prime Minister at which economic debate was dominant. After urging, like the Bhubaneshwar resolution, more socialism and quicker, the Durgapur resolution very clearly said: "Above all it is imperative that all possible measures be adopted to quicken the pace of production both in industry and agriculture and all the steps that are called for in this behalf should be implemented effectively and expeditiously."

From this, a shift of emphasis from socialism to production automatically followed, and no better place could have been chosen for making the shift than Durgapur. A wilderness until a few years earlier, it had become one of India's biggest production complexes. Priorities within production were still more clearly spelt out. "Agriculture has the highest priority in the plan. The requirements of agriculture by way of materials, skills and finance must at all times be the first charge upon the available resources." The Durgapur resolution called for "an adequate cooperative machinery" but specifically mentioned only functional cooperatives, not joint farming about which Shastri had said a day earlier: "The Congress never said it would go the whole hog with cooperative farming, but the principle has been accepted and the Congress would experiment with it." (The Nagpur resolutions were much more than an acceptance of joint farming "in principle" and much more than an "experiment with it" had been promised.)

And these were not panic measures taken in a year of acute scarcity or anxieties; this was a year when the production of foodgrains exceeded all expectations. In April, when the food trade estimated the harvest at 89 million tons, a clear ten per cent jump over the previous highest figure, the Government decided to step up wheat prices for the producer and Shastri called for a detailed plan for industry to feed the needs of agriculture. This was a long-term shift of priorities in favour of agriculture and a strong contrast with what had happened ten years earlier: a minor upswing in agriculture at the end of the first Plan led to neglect of farms in favour of factories in the second. In July 1965, a Committee of Chief Ministers

was set up to formulate new policies for food production and distribution. In August the unheard of in Indian politics happened: the Chief Ministers reached a consensus on food policy. Action was once again to lag behind policy. But the direction even here was beginning to improve. There were closer consultations between the States and the Planning Commission, and the food policy link between the Centre and the States was now in the energetic hands of C. Subramaniam, than whom no Food Minister in New Delhi has shown either a better grasp of what is needed or more energetic pursuit of it. His appointment a year before was seen by some people at that time as his demotion from the increasingly important Steel Ministry, whose affairs he had been conducting with conspicuous energy and competence. It turned out instead to be another proof that Shastri had the eye to catch the right man for the right job.

Shastri's upbringing and the background of his experience were such that even those who expected he would do well in political or even economic policy-making, could not quite see how he would handle foreign policy. Here, more than in any other field, he would be a small man in a big man's shoes. His difficulties would be the greater because of the way Nehru conducted his foreign policy: as a close preserve ruled by a coterie. In global issues he would find himself a little out of depth; in problems nearer home he would have Nehru's legacy to cope with. In both he would face the double handicap of his not having sufficient confidence in himself nor others in him; he would be swept off his feet by the currents of public opinion which since the Chinese attack had been running so strong that even Nehru would have found them not too easy to resist.

Up to a point events justified these misgivings. Deep-seated prejudice in the public mind did not make it easier for him to cope with either the Kashmir or Kutch problems. His choices were sensible but often he had to cloak them behind an appearance of intransigence. Others were not unwilling to take advantage of his weakness. The Russians, for example, drove a hard diplomatic bargain. They got more support out of him for their stand on Vietnam than they gave him for his stand either with regard to relations with China or the disputes with Pakistan. In joint statements issued with the Soviet Union,

Ayub succeeded where Shastri did not in side-stepping Soviet demands for support on Vietnam. And this was less a reflection of an Indian weakness than Shastri's. The communique issued when President Radhakrishnan went to Moscow in September, 1964, was more neutral on Vietnam than Shastri's with Kosygin. The Russians justified their silence on Indo-Pakistan issues with the plea that this would impair their ability to mediate. But this is precisely the argument that Nehru was able to use so often for avoiding commitments in public which he would have found embarrassing. Shastri on the other hand lacked at this stage the finesse or the standing this trick requires.

He found himself drawn into criticism of the U.S.A. on many an occasion when his views did not either fit the facts or India's interests. His repeated condemnation, sometimes twice or thrice a day, of American bombing raids on North Vietnam are an outstanding example. It could be that he was irritated by President Johnson's treatment of him or else that the statements came from the heart, not out of pique. But they did not make his own tasks easier when it came to defending India's direct and his essential interests. The alternative to frequent condemnation was not indifference by any means or even silence on the burning issue of Vietnam. As President Radhakrishnan showed when he made his proposal for an Afro-Asian initiative in Vietnam on April 24, 1965, peacemakers had other tasks than handing out blame. They also had the obligation to see that unless they wanted American forces to be withdrawn from Vietnam unconditionally—there is nothing to suggest that Shastri wanted that—they could not in reason insist that important supply routes of the Vietcong from the North should be left uninterrupted.

When emotions were at their height over the conflict in Kutch, Shastri allowed his or the public's temper to lead him astray. Soon after he gave the warning that the Indian army might have to act at a place and time of its own choosing, rumour became current that the United States had warned India against such a course. Sucked in by the protests which the rumour provoked Shastri angrily declared in Parliament: "If any representative of the U.S.A. told India that his country would not tolerate India's action in any new place, then how can we tolerate this? It is against the interests of the country

and we will never permit it." But there was no authentic report that the rumours were correct. In fact, the Defence Minister Chavan, discounted them a few days later. Yet Shastri had allowed himself a bit of intemperance.

There were other occasions, in Parliament and outside, when the clamour of a small but hostile minority caused Shastri to stumble, to lose friends when winning them was possible, to blur the presentation of his policy so much that its signals were misread by other countries. On the other hand, he was altogether too ready to draw a veil over his own initiatives, however intrinsically sensible, if he felt that they would not be approved by the public. A good example is the hesitation with which he disclosed that during his visit to London in the spring of 1965 he had discussed with Wilson the possibility that the big nuclear powers should jointly offer India and other non-nuclear countries some assurance of protection against nuclear blackmail by China. Some errors of detail in giving a passport to Sheikh Abdullah, and the strong criticism of them by the Opposition in Parliament, prevented Shastri from defending, adequately and in time, the decision itself to let him go which was entirely in keeping with the line he had taken towards Abdullah. The vociferous hostility of some towards Wilson's proposals for a settlemeunt in Kutch caught Shastri so badly off balance that forgetful of commitments already made by India, he gave in to the view for a time that there could be no arbitration about the disputed frontier.

But most of Shastri's foreign policy errors in this period could be put down to inexperience, a lack of sureness of touch and faults of stance and presentation. They are more than offset by his sound understanding of essentials. Hardly any of his decisions was wrong in conception. On the other hand, there were many which showed probity and a sense of timing. His preference is reflected, not only the Foreign Minister, Swaran Singh's, in the fact that the latter's first visits abroad were to smaller neighbours like Nepal, Burma, Ceylon, Afghanistan, not to the big powers. At the non-aligned conference in October in 1964, Shastri was far from difficult or unobtrusive. The initiative he took in proposing a "Ban the Bomb" mission to China did not get off the ground because adequate preparations were not made for it. But it did not lack either courage

or imagination.

At the Bandung Conference of the Afro-Asians and in the succeeding months India again showed boldness in pressing hard its demand for representation for the Soviet Union and Malaysia. Many trained observers thought the initiative was a folly. But as the time came for the next plenary gathering of the Afro-Asians, it became clearer that India had made a good investment in Soviet goodwill. Without in any way falling foul of the United States or other Western powers, India campaigned hard, and with a large measure of success—in the case of Malaysia with full success—in getting the support of other Afro-Asians for Soviet membership. In spite of pressures from within and outside the Congress party, Shastri stuck to the decision that in spite of the Chinese bomb India would remain non-nuclear. On the other hand, his talks with Wilson for a joint assurance to the non-nuclear countries by the nuclear, became the starting point of a bold new theme in international diplomacy which is still the subject of serious examination.

Apart from errors of emphasis in the joint communique, his visit to the Soviet Union in May 1965 was an outstanding success; the same valuable links of understanding were established which in Nehru's life-time had been a strong diplomatic asset for India. Agreement was reached to double trade between the two countries, and plans were discussed for co-ordinating their economic development. The Soviet Union also set at rest any doubts Shastri might have had about the improvement observable at that time in relations between the Soviet Union and Pakistan. At a Kremlin banquet for Shastri, Kossygin gave the assurance that when the Soviet Union "improves its relations with any country it does so without prejudice to its relations with India". Despite the possibility that "any country" in Kossygin's thinking might mean China (hope of narrowing the rift with Peking was not quite dead in Moscow at that time), Shastri did not hesitate in being as outspoken as he wanted in condemning atomic explosions by China. By the time his visit ended Shastri had every reason to be sure that in spite of the departure of Khrushchev the Soviet Union would not be lukewarm in supporting India against any further aggression by China. He found no sign at all that the Soviet Union would falter in giving military assistance or in

living up to the promise of assistance it had already made.

Taken as a whole, then, Shastri's first year as Prime Minister was far from disappointing. He had faced a sea of troubles but had come through. He was not yet a safely established leader but was on the way to becoming one. He was beginning to live up to the bold claim he had made, an audacious claim some might have thought at the time, only a few months after Nehru's death. In the debate on the censure motion against his Government his critics, especially the Communists, had accused him of deviating from Nehru's policies. Stung by the charge, he retorted he had his own problems and he would like to be judged by his policies towards them, not by the extent to which he deviated from or conformed to Nehru's policies. By now this would have become a bitter taunt against him if his performance had been poorer. But whatever his deficiencies in one field, they were more than offset by achievements in another, and there was fair promise in the first year that if nothing untoward happened, his ascendancy over problems and colleagues would increase. In normal circumstances he would continue to grow, becoming a Prime Minister in his own right, not merely as the least controversial successor to Nehru that the Congress could find.

But what would happen in abnormal circumstances? Could he survive another jolt like Kutch, and if he did not would the political stability of India survive? India had acquired a new Prime Minister, but had it yet acquired a new leader? She had been spared the great schism upon Nehru's death. But could she escape disintegration if exposed once again to a serious external threat? No affirmative answers were visible so far beneath the comprehensive layer of discord and indiscipline; a collapse it seemed, would not be difficult to induce if Shastri could be denied the breathing time he needed to consolidate himself and the country. This is obviously how Pakistan saw India. But not only Pakistan; many Indians too. Hence the stab of anxiety among them as Pakistan began to unfold its plans.

### DISCOVERY AND DEATH

For a long time it had been obvious that three schemes of assault upon India were available to Pakistan, to be played in

succession or combination as required by circumstances, with the help of China if it was needed and available, or if not, without it. The first was to create a disturbance in Kashmir; an attractive possibility which had been made still more attractive by the relic agitation. Success there would not only be of direct embarrassment to India, but could disrupt what remained of her secular fabric. The second was to spot another pocket like Kutch, where India would either have to accept a reverse or be lured out into unfavourable battle. If either scheme succeeded in sufficient measure, the third could be played; a hard and deep thrust by the Pakistan army to which American armour had given the power of a knock-out blow. One by one Pakistan tried all three, rolling them all into one after the Chinese Foreign Minister visited Pakistan early in September 1965; within a fortnight of that the Chinese also jumped in.

In the summer of 1965, Pakistan assembled on its side in Kashmir a large body of trained and armed guerillas whom it gave the code name "Gibraltar Forces" which were divided into units led by hand-picked officers of the regular Pakistan army. By the end of July they were trained on their tactics and briefed in detail about their allotted tasks. In the first few days of August they were launched, almost together, and ordered to converge on critical targets on the Indian side in Kashmir. By August 9, the date of a mass rally in Srinagar on the 15th anniversary of the first arrest of Sheikh Abdullah when he was deposed as the Prime Minister of Kashmir.

This plan, however, did not get very far. Three thousand guerillas penetrated deep into the Indian side by August 9 and another two thousand came by August 14, Pakistan's Independence Day. But one by one these groups were discovered, engaged and almost without exception, dispersed. For a time they caused severe harassment in three different areas: in the north near Kargil, where the cease-fire line comes within a mile and a half of the vital road to Ladakh; in the Udhampur bulge, where the cease-fire line makes a dangerous lunge west of Srinagar into the all important Valley of Jhelum; and further south in some predominantly Muslim and disturbed areas of the province of Jammu. In the face of Indian retaliation did not fumble. After Pakistan's

the cease-fire line had been clearly reported to the world by the United Nations Military Observer teams in Kashmir, Indians confidently crossed the line themselves and cleared the Pakistanis off, on August 15, India's Independence Day, from positions overlooking the road to Ladakh. Ten days later they burst into the Poonch-Uri bulge and not only straightened it out but captured a strategic road which they had brilliantly used eighteen years earlier to frustrate Pakistani raiders in the first war of Kashmir. This gave them 250 square miles of territory held by Pakistan and plugged most of the routes the infiltrators were using for seeping into the Valley. In the third area, to the south, they were still winking the raiders out when Pakistan put the second scheme into operation.

Throughout the second half of August the United Nations Secretary-General had been busy trying to persuade both India and Pakistan to bring the operations to a halt. After some days' delay which India could not understand, he reported to the Security Council on September 3: that "I have not obtained from the Government of Pakistan any assurance that the cease-fire and the cease-fire line will be respected henceforth or that efforts would be extended to restore conditions to normal along that line. I did receive assurance from the Government of India . . . that India would act with restraint with regard to any retaliatory acts and will respect the cease-fire agreement and the cease-fire line if Pakistan does likewise."

But on September 1 Pakistan had already resorted to serious escalation of the conflict. On that date it launched "Operation Grand Slam" at 4 A.M. with 90 tanks and an infantry brigade. It aimed a triple thrust: at the town of Jammu itself; at a road leading from Jammu to the Uri-Poonch bulge; and beyond that to the Indian lifeline in Kashmir, the road from Jammu to Srinagar. It chose for its operation the Chhamb-Jaurian sector, a narrow wedge of territory hard and flat on the Pakistan side, quite fit for armour, and bounded on the Indian side by a river which has no bridges over it, the sandy bed of the shifting water-course, and beyond that low-lying hills—a country fit for the deployment of infantry, and that too before the rains swell the river, but quite unsuitable for armour. This was the site chosen for staging another "Kutch".

But this time, instead of hesitating, India retaliated with



aircraft. The decision to use them was taken only at 5.10 P.M. in New Delhi. By 6 P.M., that is within 18 hours of the start of the attack by Pakistan, the first attack sorties had been launched. Before daylight failed 15 Pakistani tanks had been knocked out by air action, the thrust of Pakistani armour blunted and both the roads saved from immediate disruption. Two days later, when Pakistan threw in American Sabre-jets, Indian-made Gnats made such decisive retaliation that they succeeded beyond the expectations of either side. The Gnats forced the Sabres to unfavourable altitudes, out-maneuvred them and shot them down.

But the ground battle was still dangerous from India's point of view. Pakistan's initial thrust had been absorbed, but its renewal could still threaten India's position in the whole of Kashmir and on the Ladakh front against China. On September 6 India took the only action that would have helped: it opened a new front, further south and more directly facing key targets in Pakistan like Sialkot, Pakistan's biggest military base and cantonment behind the Kashmir front, and Lahore, the second biggest city of West Pakistan and its political and intellectual headquarters. There was some initial fumbling by India in explaining the attack. But two days later, with Pakistan mounting another bid in the Chhamb-Jaurian sector, the Indian Defence Minister disclosed the real reasons: to relieve the pressure on Jammu and on the roads leading out of it. Both sides had now crossed international frontiers and taken a potentially disastrous plunge into escalation. Each side had committed six to seven divisions to battle, which for Pakistan meant nearly the whole of its army and for India everything she could find without disturbing the six divisions or so pinned to their positions by the Chinese confrontation.

Pakistan now had the chance to bring the third scheme into play, which was to use its superiority in the fire-power and mobility to by-pass from the southwest India's main concentrations on the Jullundur-Amritsar axis, pierce the softer belly of Punjab southwest of this axis, and following instead of crossing the major waterways of this area, take Indian army concentrations in Punjab in the rear. The critical targets of the scheme were Indian communications across the river Beas. If these were snapped, the bulk of the Indian army not committed to

face China in north-eastern India would be cut off from Western Punjab and Kashmir, and good roads to Delhi would lie ahead, undefended.

India's plans were of a limited nature at this stage, though if the fighting had continued and fortune favoured, objectives would have grown larger with opportunity. General Chaudhuri, Chief of the Staff of the Indian Army, who knew more about armour than any soldier on either side, aimed only to bring Pakistan's tank strength out to battles of his own choosing, and cripple the menacing threat which had been growing on India's western flank ever since the day Pakistan joined S.E.A.T.O. and C.E.N.T.O. pacts and began to receive American armament in bulk. He was criticised by those who had not comprehended his aims. Many Indians were angry, some in positions of high authority, because he did not march on Lahore when its capture was attainable. Many foreign commentators, thinking of the fast and deep-ranging tank thrusts of the Second World War, derided his tactics on the approaches to Sialkot because Indian tanks milled around in the dusty plains for days. But he succeeded in doing what he had set out to do: grim battles in the Lahore and Sialkot sectors became the burial ground of the fame of Pakistani armour, especially the American Pattons.

A sober, overall strategy, matched by brilliant tactics at the lower levels, converted every Indian handicap into advantage, exposed sophisticated American armour to the kind of battle it could not fight, lured opposing commanders into reckless ambition, and blunted the enemy's punch so badly that for the next few years at least India was secured against any overt adventure by the Pakistan army. The same tactics paid off in the air as on the ground. The over-sophistication of the enemy was turned to its disadvantage, and of all the weapons used in this war, none proved its worth more conclusively than the Indian made *Gnat*. This simple but highly manoeuvrable aircraft took the glamour out of Sabres and Starfighters.

After the battles had ended, the gift of hindsight aided appraisal. Two authoritative and independent estimates of India's strategy appeared, one British, one American; both corresponded to India's own estimates of achievement. The Defence Correspondent of the London *Times*, although more anxious to prove that the British-built Centurions of the Indian

army were superior to the American *Pattons*, also conceded that among the Indian army's trophies was "a graveyard of about 50 Pakistan tanks, mostly (Patton) M48s, collected simply from one engagement close to the Lahore-Amritsar road.... At least 18 M48s were recovered in full working order.... The prospects for Pakistan in any future armoured battle are gloomy, and will not improve as they must rely on further deliveries of American tanks, a doubtful contingency at present. India on the other hand is already producing the first models (this was written before the end of 1965) of the 37-ton light tank designed by Vickers which mounts the 105 mm. gun, generally accepted to be the best tank gun in service in the world". Conversely, more concerned with protecting the reputation of the Patton, the *US Army Command and General Staff College Journal* paid tribute, nevertheless, to the Indian army's tactical development and strong sense of opportunity. After examining the rival claims by India and Pakistan of losses inflicted on the enemy, a commentator in the Journal said that Indian losses were 114 tanks and 57 armoured cars; Pakistan's 471 tanks and armoured cars "destroyed crippled or captured".

The Journal described the Patton as "vastly superior to Centurions and Shermans" but added "The tanks themselves were better handled by the Indians". "The modernity of the Patton" was its undoing *vis-a-vis* the older, slower, weaker Centurions and Shermans used by the Indians. The Journal blamed Pakistan for poor battle deployment, for leaving the flanks of their armoured columns unprotected, for giving no infantry support to the armour and leaving tanks starved of fuel and "a prey for Indian hunter-killer teams which stopped the Pattons with jeeps mounted with 106 mm. recoilless guns, bazookas and flame-throwers". In the battle on the plains between Lahore and Amritsar, Pakistani tanks were lured into water-soaked muddy ground, where they became the target for Indian gunners; the few hard and dry tracks had been mined by the Indians. In some of the battles Pattons were out-maneuvred into tall sugarcane crops, where their visibility suffered as much as manouverability, while the Indians took up a strictly defensive posture in horseshoe or V formations which paid off when Pakistani armour was trapped. In air battles also "the American-made jet aircraft utilised by the Pakistan Air

Force were too modern for conventional frontline warfare".

Pakistan's gamble was as desperate and as unavailing in diplomacy as in battle. Just as it had hoped for a swift coup with its armour, it tried the shock tactics of diplomatic intimidation, and faced equal disappointment. At the height of its powerful thrust through Jaurian towards Jammu, the Chinese Foreign Minister arrived in Karachi and jointly with Bhutto accused India of "armed provocation". India refused to draw the lesson it was supposed to, but Pakistan apparently drew one which it should not have. It began to count upon China much more than it should have. To all third party appeals for an immediate cease-fire it gave the brusque answer, which Bhutto repeated on September 13 and Ayub on September 15, that peace could be had only on Pakistan's terms. These were that there must be prior agreements for withdrawal of all troops from Kashmir, the induction of an Afro-Asian force in the State, and a commitment by India that there would be a plebiscite within three months.

The state of the battle did not justify this verbal belligerency. What did explain it became obvious late on September 17: soon after midnight the Indian envoy in Peking was handed an ultimatum. There was no direct reference in it to the war with Pakistan, but the timing made that formality unnecessary. India must immediately destroy posts it had set up on Chinese territory or face counter-action by China, it said. Shastri responded with the coolest display of nerve in his career. Where some hesitation in choosing his answer might have been justified, within hours he announced that any threat by China would be resolutely met but if there were any Indian posts on Chinese territory. China was capable and at liberty to destroy them if it wanted. It was the Chinese response that became uncertain: first they extended the ultimatum by three days and then quietly backed down from it.

Why China did so is still a matter for speculation. The Big Two powers obviously had something to do with it. Dean Rusk had publicly warned China three days earlier: "Stay out of it." Indirectly the Soviet Union had said, through *Tass*: "No Government has the right to add fuel to the flame"; if anyone did, it would have "a grave responsibility". According to reports in October, the United States repeated its warning on

September 15 at Warsaw, where the ambassadors of the two countries have continued their curious dialogue for some years now. But this had not deterred China from delivering the ultimatum, nor had it dissuaded Pakistan from banking on it; on September 16 the Associated Press reported diplomats in Moscow to be of the view that Pakistan rejected United Nations proposals for a cease-fire because it knew of the Chinese ultimatum in advance. In any case, it is possible that China meant to do no more than wage intimidation. But the manoeuvre did as much to enhance the status of Shastri as leader as the success of Indian arms.

India's indirect gains from Pakistan's misadventure were as great as those directly made in the battlefield. Not merely the army recovered its morale—shattered by the Chinese three years earlier—but the whole country did. For the army this experience was rejuvenation. Its officers, barring a few who disgraced themselves, vied with each other in washing the stain of bad leadership they had gathered, earned or otherwise, in NEFA. So often did they exceed the call of duty, or even of caution, that they led in attack even when they need or should not have. The result, even if it showed a little imprudence, was the fame-winning one that in proportion to the total, casualties among the officers were much higher than they usually are or even should be; but it restored to them the respect they had lost in the eyes of the men, and it restored to the Army its respect in the eyes of the country.

When the lists of casualties and awards began to come out, many people understood for the first time, not with the help of statistics but with their hearts, what an assembly of races and faiths India is; how closely its parts are knit with the whole. Of the men who died or won the awards in the extreme north-west corner of the country, as many were from Madras and Bengal as from the nearby States. There were Hindus among them, Muslims, Parsees, Christians, Anglo-Indians, and tribals. And more Sikhs per thousand of their population than any other community—and it was the Sikhs whom Pakistan had made the special target of subversive propaganda. More than anything else this showed how badly Pakistan had misunderstood the depth of the fissures in Indian society.

Pakistan's mistake was understandable. The cacophony of

discord in India over the past three years, especially in the few months following the skirmish in Kutch, had been deafening. But these were the trees, not the wood, which Pakistan mistook them to be. The wood showed itself in the first few days of the fighting by India's multi-religious, multi-racial armed forces and by the political system of the country which suspended for the time being all its internal feuding. Here and there were signs of jingoistic exuberance, the exaggerated assertiveness of those who are unable to digest their patriotism. But generally there was mature and steady self-confidence, much more than Pakistan, and possibly India, expected; and it was particularly marked in areas closest to the battle, the western districts of Punjab.

In Kashmir, where Pakistan probably expected an uprising, there was growing apprehension, not jubilation, as people remembered the days of 1947 when marauders from Pakistan had wrought havoc in the State. In fact, the first information that infiltration was taking place reached the Government, though this has never been publicly acknowledged, from the political associates of Sheikh Abdullah. To them Pakistan's conquest of Kashmir would be no more welcome than their present status within India. Here again the relic agitation had turned out to be a red herring for Pakistan. Before the fighting was a few days old the view is known to have spread among the Kashmiris that if India was now prepared to face a war with Pakistan, there was no chance that she would agree to abandon Kashmir. Many of the leaders of the relic agitation concluded that the best they could now hope or ask for was greater autonomy for Kashmir *but within the Indian Union* and it is a great deal more than likely that if Shastri had lived he would have picked up the threads of discussion with Abdullah on some such basis as this. At the last meeting this author had with him, on December 31, 1965, Shastri was confident that Abdullah would also come round to this view. It appeared to Shastri to be only a matter of time when he would be able to resume at least one of the two tasks to which he had given such high priority and come to stable terms with the opposition in Kashmir even if negotiations with Pakistan had become impossible.

Relations between civil authority and the armed forces

acquired a new and, as far as one could see, stable balance, entirely in keeping with what democracy requires. This was such a novel and encouraging development, such a healthy exception to what has happened in so many countries and such a deviation from earlier trends within India too, that it deserves a brief discussion here even at the risk of interrupting this narration of events relating to the September War.

At worst it was never more than an exaggerated fear that a military coup would occur in India. By its composition the Army—the other two Services are too small to be relevant in this context—lacks a sufficiently strong, homogeneous and dominant clique which could make a secret bid for a take-over; recruitment at all levels is scattered over various regions, religions and classes, which makes the Army a true cross-section of the country but a secretly planned coup by a clique very difficult. For a take-over which occurs because the public demands it, the civilian government's record so far, taken as a whole, has not been bad enough; the public's mind would not yet turn too willingly to the Army as a substitute for the kind of political leadership India has had. Many of those who feel impatient with the slower pace of democracy are not enamoured of military rule either. Besides, they are aware that the politicalisation of vast numbers of people has gone so far, and so many people have acquired such a vested interest in the political process, that a non-political dictatorship (the outlook for a political dictatorship has been discussed in the final chapter) would run into a strong and organised resistance both from the extreme Right and the Left.

Nevertheless the opinion of a great many Indians, whether they be in uniform or not, has been influenced by the fate of several countries of Asia and Africa which became independent about the same time as India or soon afterwards. Some have been influenced in the sense that they regard the fate of, say, Egypt as something which India should emulate; some in the sense that they have become excessively suspicious of the slightest sign of ambition in a soldier. Both kinds carried well into the post-independence years certain antipathies which had developed between them before independence. The political leadership was unfamiliar with the public at large, indifferent towards the whole area of the armed forces and their concerns.

For a long time very little had happened to encourage sustained interest in military affairs among civilians. On the other hand quite a lot happened to make politically conscious people somewhat resentful of the armed forces remaining aloof from the mainstream of national sentiment; on their part the armed forces felt superior and separate and nursed their own resentments in a somewhat haughty isolation. The smart young man in uniform was at best treated with respect by some people; but neither he nor they felt a part of each other.

From about the end of the 'fifties, a phase of more intense irritation and suspicion began, especially after Krishna Menon became the Defence Minister. A most deplorable sequence of developments followed in which each side rubbed the other up the wrong way, much to the detriment of the country's interests and the neglect of its defences. As the inadequacies of the Congress began to weigh upon the mind of India, some senior soldiers and many other people began to talk, with more carelessness than calculation, of the chances of a revolution of the colonels in India. It is possible that ambition began to take a clearer shape in some bemedaled breasts. That, if true, was bad enough; but it was much worse that unfounded suspicions began to guide the policies and attitudes of political authority. Whether to decapitate any senior soldier whom he considered too independent to be safe, or to build up a soldiers' junta of his own choice which would be ready to serve his unspoken ambitions, Krishna Menon began to play havoc with promotions in the armed forces. How disastrous his game was became better known later; early in 1967 an article appeared in a Calcutta newspaper,<sup>1</sup> written under a pseudonym but transparently by a very senior Army officer, which mercilessly exposed how wrecklessly Menon had played with the careers of some of the topmost officers in the three armed services. One of the reasons why he was able to get away with it was that he could silence incipient criticism by spreading dark hints about the ambitions of some officers. In the atmosphere of suspicion aroused by what was happening in other countries, and in the midst of the total secrecy which has surrounded the Defence Ministry since the pre-independence

<sup>1</sup> *The Hindustan Standard*



days (when it was the preserve of British officers), Menon did not have to do much more to keep the curious at arm's length.

But everyone could feel that tension and friction were mounting, and with such a demoralising impact upon the services that it undid whatever Menon had tried to do, and that was much, for defence science and production and for junior officers and the ranks soon after he took over as Defence Minister. The spirit of the army, its strongest weapon, grew weaker. In 1960 it snapped: the Chief of the Army Staff, General Thimayya, object of suspicion in many political eyes because he was competent, popular and ambitious, resigned in protest against some high-ranking army appointments decided between them by Nehru and Menon. This was bad enough for the Army's morale. But worse followed three days later: with nothing achieved, Thimayya withdrew his resignation after a cup of tea with Nehru. The Army stood naked in the public eye for the petulance of its protest, which should not have been staged at all or else followed through. It was in such a state that the Army approached the battle in NEFA, from which many senior officers came back with blackened reputations; the blackest was that of the officer, General Kaul, whose promotion by Nehru and Menon in the teeth of Thimayya's disapproval had precipitated the crisis of 1960.

In 1967 Kaul was to show himself to be as graceless and inferior as a person as in NEFA he had shown himself to be incompetent as a soldier. But when he chose to publish, more in the interests of self-glory than truth, *The Untold Story* of India's debacle in NEFA, he laid bare some more aspects of the unhealthy relationship between civilian and military authorities. He showed Menon to be appallingly indifferent towards the advice of the commanders, arrogant and overbearing in his behaviour towards them; as for Nehru, he appears to have been virtually in Menon's pocket, at least as far as the conduct of the Defence Ministry was concerned.

A succession of senior commanders warned the government about India's military unpreparedness; their advice was not only turned down but often not even acknowledged. Such re-equipping as Menon agreed to was wrecked by his political prejudices, his insistence that equipment must be bought only from the Soviet Union despite its inferiority to what was avail-

able from other countries, that domestic production must be confined to factories owned by the government, more particularly by the Defence Ministry, despite their inability to cope with needs and despite the willingness and ability of private industry to help; in both respects he contemptuously rejected the advice of the Services. Instead of respecting independence of judgment in others, he picked and promoted soldiers whom he considered more suited to his purposes; Kaul rose faster than most. The inevitable result was bickering and back-biting between generals, jealousy and mistrust; Kaul's book reeks of these.

In operational matters the relations ever worse. Disagreement over means and objectives was so wide, disregard of the soldiers' viewpoint so ruthless, that when Nehru and Menon decided on military action to clear out the Chinese from areas they had captured, the Army Chief demanded written orders before he would commit his forces to what he believed to be a suicidal course. When the operations at last began, there was constant interference with the discretion of local commanders, and the movements of battalions and companies were sometimes decided at conferences held by Menon in New Delhi! The situation was ominously similar to that which led to the Egyptian debacle in Gaza, the revolt of the colonels and the rise of a military dictatorship in that country. An ill-equipped army was being driven into a battle with which it did not agree, and the conduct of operations was being decided by politicians over the heads of the men on the spot.

When Chavan became Defence Minister after the downfall of Menon, he showed a far healthier respect for the dividing line between the political and military aspects of defence and the respective responsibilities of the political head of the Defence Ministry and the Chiefs of the Services. But the morale and image of the Army had barely begun to improve when it was exposed to the attack by Pakistan in Kutch. If the Army's reputation had been better, public opinion would have been less impatient with it over its decision not to give Pakistan battle. But the reputation could hardly have been more besmirched, and General Chaudhuri, now Chief of the Army Staff and like Thimayya suspected by some politicians to have the worm of *amhitia* in his breast, came to be derided by

them in private conversation as the man who would not fight. The taunt was strong, and the overheated atmosphere of New Delhi at that time made it so piercing, that at one time there was danger that it would compel rash action.

About the same time, another sign of the politicians' mistrust of the man in uniform came to the surface. Suspecting it as a risky invitation to ambition, the government rejected a proposal that the command of the three armed services should be unified, not only nominally in the hands of the President, who is also Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, but professionally under a Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces with the rank of Field Marshal. Only a few months later Kamaraj warned Congress Governments and the Communists alike against the consequences of the former calling out the Army too often to deal with the disturbances which the Communists were spreading wrecklessly all over the country; one day, he implied, the Army might refuse to go back to barracks and the Communists may find that they had fallen from the frying pan of Congress rule into the fire of a military dictatorship.

This was the background against which Shastri and Chaudhuri had to restore the proper relationship of the Army with civil power, and they did so with amazing success. The personal equation between them, healthy from the start, withstood the pressure of the crisis over Kutch. In September 1965, it flowered. On one side the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister, on the other the Army Chief and his colleagues showed such perfect understanding of each other's role that each became doubly effective in his area. The forces' chiefs took every major issue to an inner Cabinet where alternatives and their consequences were freely discussed. Once the decisions were taken—and they were clearly the civilian leadership's—the forces were left free to carry them out in complete confidence that they had the united backing of the Cabinet.

Thus were the decisions taken and carried out to cross the cease-fire line in Kashmir in August, to use the Air Force in the Chhamb sector on September 1 to cross into West Pakistan on September 6, to refrain from any retaliation against Pakistan in the East, where easy dividends coveted by soldiers were ready for the plucking. So also was the decision taken to

give up all the gains when third-party terms for a cease-fire required it. There was a slight hesitation over withdrawal from the Uri-Poonch bulge; the tactical importance of controlling it was considerable for the Army. But Shastri felt himself under no strain of disapproval by the armed forces—his worry was public opinion—when he decided that India must withdraw from there too.

Equally, Shastri on his side imposed no personal preferences, and did not allow any of his colleagues to do so, on matters which he felt should be left to the armed forces. The working of the team was known to everyone and it had a most heartening effect on both sides. The Chinese ultimatum was first discussed by Shastri with Chaudhuri before he took his intended response to the Cabinet. The Ministers had assembled in a mood of grave anxiety, but before words were spoken self-confidence returned when Shastri and Chaudhuri entered the room together with no burden on their faces. On Shastri's first birthday after the September War, Chaudhuri sent the Prime Minister a message of greetings which was conspicuously warm in its phrasing. A day or two later he said to the present author that he meant every syllable of it. He was conscious, he said, of what the armed forces had done in the summer to uphold the political order. But he was still more conscious of Shastri's cool instinct for the right course and his deliberate, unhesitating exercise of the choice once the full range of alternatives was placed before him.

There were other signs of the emergence of Shastri. Visually the most impressive was the tumultuous reception he got wherever he went in the course of a countrywide tour in the last three months of his life. The welcome he received from soldiers in the frontline was made the more memorable by the incongruity of the sight—a man of the most unmilitary bearing being heard with unmistakable respect and attention by professional soldiers who had freshly won the battle. The welcome in the cities equalled receptions given to Nehru when he was at his height. The audiences which turned out in Bombay and Madras, places remote from any personally felt impact of the War, had no precedence that anyone could recall.

At times Shastri was "tougher" than necessary. After the

conduct of the war had shown that here was no weak and faltering leader, he could afford to be less ready to take offence, to lead public temper into cooler rather than hotter regions of debate, to help controversy subside instead of letting it mushroom into an angry cloud. But he did not play this role as often as he could have. Therefore some avoidable irritations developed: between India and Britain over an unfortunate and ignorant remark by Wilson which one-sidedly blamed India for the escalation of the September War; between Shastri and U. Thant over the latter's failure to appreciate, because of a failure of communications, that India's response to the U.N.'s cease-fire proposals was more positive than Pakistan's, between India and the U.N. when Foreign Minister Swaran Singh walked out of the Security Council in protest against an abusive speech by Bhutto but made it appear that he was walking out on the more basic issue of India's right in Kashmir, between India and the U.S.A. over diplomatic bungling which needs a closer look later.<sup>1</sup>

But if the net result of policy is the best test of its performance, it is easier to justify his combining the purposes of peace with those of firm national leadership, which India badly needed. In fact, he could not have served peace as well as he did if he had not at the same time showed due—and occasionally even more than due—firmness. Further proofs of this are in the Tashkent summit between India and Pakistan which the Soviet Union, playing its strongest diplomatic hand in southern Asia so far, succeeded in bringing about under its own auspices. In spite of the goodwill in India towards the Soviet Union, it was not easy for Shastri to prepare the country for two things which he knew he would have to accept at Tashkent: some discussion with Ayub, however informal, about the future of Kashmir, and the withdrawal of Indian forces from the Uri-Poonch area. The latter he was worried about even until the moment of his departure for Tashkent (But I do not believe, as many people do, that he was killed by the fear of adverse reactions in India to his acceptance of the withdrawal at Tashkent; by the end of 1965 he was too well established and skilled in handling public opinion to let

<sup>1</sup> See page 332 ff.

this kind of worry kill him, and there was enough popular substance in the Tashkent Declaration to enable him to sell the unpopular also.) But he brought the country round to his discussing Kashmir by letting the tough give cover to what was not so tough. Though he took two steps back for every three he took forward, and from time to time appeared to say that he would never discuss Kashmir with any one, he also mingled with this, of course with the proper show of firmness, willingness to state India's views very clearly if any one wanted him to discuss Kashmir. In the midst of the applause for the firmness it was hardly noticed that he was not saying any looser there would be no discussion on Kashmir. Stating India's views and hearing the other side's is all that discussions meant. It would have been better if he did not have to be devious. But he was probably not mistaken in his judgment that it was not yet time for him to make a frontal assault upon popular feelings.

A better measure of the change in his stature than the way he slipped his policies past the barriers of popular prejudice was his workings in the smaller circle of the party and the government. A better measure and for me, more vivid: I had two chance-given opportunities of seeing him at work, one at the start of his tenure as Prime Minister and one towards the end; the contrast could not have been greater. To borrow liberally from my account of the two meetings in *The Statesman*, published two days after his death: "I had glimpses of Mr. Shastri in both phases, at the hesitant start and in his days of mastery, and the contrast fills me with admiration and amazement. On June 2, 1964, a bare ten hours after he had been unanimously elected Prime Minister by his party, I had an un-arranged, almost an accidental meeting with Mr. Shastri, an unexpected extension of a call a friend was making on him. As was usual in those days and for some time after, a thick bunch of visitors hovered round him like bees; as he paced up and down the lawn they paced on both sides and behind, hoping to slip in a word as one conversation ended and another began. Backwards and forwards the pendulum of his evening walk swung across the lawn, a festoon of people trailing behind him, some waiting for a chance to offer congratulations, others to receive his blessings, till at the top of one

turn he saw me standing beyond the edge of the garden and—to my surprise and embarrassment—walked towards me with my friend.

"The conversation, which Mr. Shastri started, was even more surprising; he switched it round from polite generalities to what was uppermost in his mind, the Cabinet; he was expected to announce his team any day. He started a series of probing questions: how would the public react to this name and that, what cabinets had been formed in journalistic speculation, what kind of a team were the people expecting. I answered as best as my bewilderment allowed, and then took refuge in what I thought was a generality: 'The people', I said, 'are hopefully waiting for a clean Government. So long as you give them that, they will accept any team.' As later events were to show, this was his own intense preference too. But at the moment my remark turned out to be far from refuge; a new run of searching queries followed about who would be regarded as tainted and who not, and all the earlier questions now seemed intended to be only a prelude to these. With my answers and his own un-resolved preoccupations, Mr. Shastri disappeared again into the crowd."

Later during his months as Prime Minister, there were other opportunities to meet, but a comparable meeting occurred late in the evening of December 31, 1965, the last New Year's Eve of his life. I had asked for an appointment before anyone knew that he was going to lose his Finance Minister that day. There had been some charges of impropriety against T. T. Krishnamachari, and while correspondence was still going on between him and Shastri about whether and how they should be looked into, Krishnamachari put in a peremptory resignation. "My appointment had been fixed before Mr. Shastri learnt that Mr. Krishnamachari had decided to quit the Cabinet, and I had no hope that in the midst of the turmoil of this development the Prime Minister would have any time to see me at all. But the appointment suffered only a slight postponement, while Mr. Shastri went to the President to announce the name of the successor, and within a few moments of my meeting him it became obvious why my name had not disappeared from the day's list of engagements: there was no turmoil, not even agitation or excitement on his face or in

his voice or in his manners, not a trace of the worries of a Prime Minister who had just had to choose a new Finance Minister, and in such circumstances! His conversation was as relaxed as at many other meetings I had with him on far less eventful occasions.

"That December 1 was not an ordinary day for Mr. Shastri. Only a week earlier he had returned from a hurried visit to Burma. Since then he had been in the midst of the most intense preparations for Tashkent; his Foreign Minister had just returned from a delicately timed mission to Moscow. On January 1 he was to receive Mr. Heath and on January 2 Mr. Harri-man, a bare twentyfour hours before his own departure for Tashkent. Mr. Shastri thus stood in the thick of a field—foreign affairs—which even his admirers had once suspected was a little alien to him. On top of this his Finance Minister had resigned, on the dustiest issue of the past few years, the suspicion of corruption in high places and the responsibilities of the Prime Minister with regard to it. Moving neatly and precisely, Mr. Shastri had picked a most unexpected successor, showing the same courage and cool unorthodoxy which President Johnson showed when he picked Mr. Goldberg as successor to Mr. Stevenson. He might have had reason to wonder how the people would react, but at the end of what must have been a long day for him he showed not the slightest un-sureness; as he explained what had happened, his words had the quiet orderliness of his office at No. 10 Jan Path, where we sat till nearly 9.30 P.M.". He did not feel obliged to consult Kamaraj—who later showed his resentment at not being consulted—or any one else; he did not use the opportunity to win over or slight any faction in the party. He took the decision for reasons which appealed to him most, and for his own reasons chose a most unexpected successor whom Shastri himself had met only three or four times. In both actions he felt confident of carrying his colleagues with him.

The man he chose was Sachin Chaudhuri. He was a well-known barrister, but knew more about taxation laws than economic affairs; his dealings with finance had not extended much beyond negotiating some loans from the World Bank for a leading company which he represented. But the reasons Shastri gave for choosing Chaudhuri, as well as the reasons



which others believe to be more true, are pointers to what Shastri's actions in the future would have been if there had been a future for him. "He takes a sober and balanced view of problems", Shastri said, seeing and admiring in another what was his own most outstanding quality—the ability to stand above the passions of the moment, to look beyond the current demands of the populace to the long-term interests of the country—and the surest sign of his rapid maturing as Prime Minister during the nineteen months that he held this office, for only about as many months as Nehru held it for years. Repeatedly Shastri spoke of a speech by Chaudhuri which had made a deep impression on what was almost a hostile Lok Sabha: when the mood of the House demanded warlike speeches and of the country warlike deeds in retaliation against what Pakistan had done in Kutch, Chaudhuri spoke in favour of referring the dispute to a tribunal. "He is not carried away by excitement", Shastri said, echoing his own preference for the unemotional course.

Krishnamachari showed himself unable to appreciate what had become for Shastri one of the major preoccupations, that not only should his government be free of corruption but should be seen to be so. Shastri did not believe that there was much substance in the charges. But he wanted that others should see that too, and therefore was keen to refer the charges to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court for advice. Krishnamachari insisted that these were political charges and should be disposed of by the political leadership, that is by the Prime Minister himself. But Shastri was convinced that public opinion would not be satisfied with his verdict of "not guilty" upon a political colleague; this had happened once before and he did not wish to repeat the experience. Krishnamachari disagreed and resigned—three days before the Prime Minister was to leave for Moscow, and in the midst of preparations for one of India's most difficult budgets, which was to be presented only two months hence. But by agreeing to let him go at such a juncture, Shastri made it inevitable, whether he intended it or not, (he probably did), that whenever authoritative people in future made any formal charges against a minister, the Prime Minister would have to set a satisfactory process in motion and not sit on the allega-

tions, as used to happen in the past. Since Shastri became Prime Minister the air had been cleared of much of the smell of corruption; this action would have helped to clear it further. The force of this example might have spread to the States, where the results could only have been wholly beneficial.

It was said by Shastri's and Chaudhuri's critics that the change in the Finance Ministry was a daylight murder of socialism. Krishnamachari himself gave the suspicion wide currency; in the correspondence which culminated in his letter of resignation, and in a press statement soon after, he presented himself as a victim of big business, of which Chaudhuri was believed by some people to be a friend. Krishnamachari wrote to the Prime Minister in one of his letters that he had often reminded the government "of the need for a proper orientation of our policies but the temper of some of our colleagues is very much against any change in a progressive direction in the matter of these polities".

The grain of truth in the charge confirmed the impression which had been building up during Shastri's tenure that policies were shifting from an ideological bias towards pragmatism, a shift which has continued since Shastri's death. Only, it hardly lay in Krishnamachari's mouth to make this allegation; in his own day he had been of considerable help to big business. His main contribution to socialism was a certain prickliness of temperament, an inability to get on with colleagues, and a readiness to cause offence to those with whom he did not agree. His successor on the other hand, like Shastri himself, made up for any lack of expert knowledge by a supple understanding unencumbered by ideology, by the willingness to listen to different viewpoints, and by the intelligent layman's instinct for the right course.

It is not extravagant to hope that with these qualities building up in the team he was evolving in New Delhi, and would have further evolved in forming the new Cabinet after the 1967 elections, Shastri would have tried to make effective use of the powers placed in his hands, though in the flush of a crisis, a few months earlier. At the Bangalore session of the A.I.C.C. in July 1965 it was decided that the Central leadership, both in the Government and the party, should have additional powers to settle inter-state disputes, or those between

state units of the party or between a state government and the party unit. In September the National Development Council unanimously authorized Shastri to "reorient, alter and amend the Fourth Plan as necessary to suit the country's defence". Because of the unlimited amplitude given to defence needs, this was a vast power indeed, greater than any similar power ever formally handed over to Nehru. In the same summer the States agreed to give the Planning Commission independent authority to assess the food requirements or food surpluses of each State. Since inflation of requirements and understatement of surpluses are two of the root causes of effective food administration, independent assessment by the Planning Commission, which the States committed themselves in advance to accept, would have been of enormous help. A little later the Food Minister circulated to the Planning Commission a plan for enhancing the powers of the Central Food Ministry for improving the food economy. These initiatives have since been gathering dust. Possibly they would have even if Shastri had lived. But the trend in the last few months of his life suggests that he would have converted them into versatile instruments of his domestic policy, economic and political.

### AN INVERTED FAITH

But it was in foreign policy that the quickest transformation from gloom to opportunity occurred in the last couple of months of Shastri's life. Foreign relations were the one part of his inheritance which, bad from the beginning, had continued to deteriorate in spite of his bold attempts to improve it. Before he became Prime Minister, India had already lost some of the options she had once. Its role of the honest broker between the two power blocs had ended; the parties were in direct contact instead, which also meant that India could no longer play them off one against the other. With the comradeship of Peking gone, India had lost its value to the Western world as its only window on China; she had also lost the prestige which went with being a partner in Asia's up and coming two-some. Her role in the Afro-Asian world stood extinguished, and there was no chance of impressing any one now with her standing in the large coloured lobby of the United Nations. This was the un-

promising basis from which Shastri began, and then the start he made ran into very early trouble.

Shastri had set himself three objectives in foreign policy: to soften and ultimately resolve the deadlock with China and Pakistan, to improve relations with all countries nearer home and if necessary to that end, to start hobnobbing a little less with the Big Powers, and in relations with the Big Two, convert the policy of equi-distance into one of equal proximity, to be as close to each as was possible without offending the other. But just as China's attack upset Nehru's calculations, Pakistan's upset Shastri's. It put an end to hopes of a *detente* with Pakistan. Many influential opinion-makers in India continued to be hopeful even after the Kutch fighting; President Radhakrishnan still counselled peaceful relations with Pakistan; the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, an influential trade union body, the Chairman of the S. S. P. and the Chief Organizer of the R. S. S. urged India to seek constitutional links with Pakistan. But the cordiality without which such ideas cannot prosper was so badly damaged by the Kutch attack, the infiltrations in Kashmir and the war which followed, that even the Tashkent spirit could only revive it temporarily. With China's ominously-timed attempt at intimidation, hopes of improving that equation also evaporated.

Attempts to achieve equal proximity to the Big Two also had a rough passage to begin with. In spite of the assurances Moscow gave in the summer of 1965, genuine and fully backed up by deeds though they were, a sense of change in Moscow's attitude persisted in New Delhi. There was no mistaking Moscow's desire to wean Pakistan away from China and the U.S.A., and what could be a better bait for this major exercise in persuasion than offer of mediation with India over Kashmir? Even if no pressure were put upon India—none was—to give up Kashmir, if Moscow only became neutral the results could be very damaging for India; there would be no one left to rescue her from tight corners in the U.N. The effect upon relations with U.S.A. would be embarrassing: dependence upon its goodwill, already great because of the state of India's economy and China's attack, would become even greater. This would upset the balance of India's foreign policy, as well as the delicate balance between the domestic Right and Left.

From this dilemma India could only have been rescued by exceptional understanding and sympathy in the U.S.A., such as was extended during and for some time after the Chinese attack. But U.S. diplomacy had become heavy handed now, especially towards India. Instead of preparing the ground privately for public announcements, there was such abrupt announcement of unpleasant decisions that a rich store of ill-will was being built up in India.

A good example of the change is the way Shastri's visit to the U.S.A. was cancelled. Johnson had an excellent precedent for not doing what he did. When disagreement arose between India and the U.S.A. in 1963 over the sensitive issue of U.S. aid for a major steel plant in the public sector at Bokharo, it was arranged that India should withdraw its request for aid rather than be refused; a troublesome issue was smoothly put out of the way without damage to relations between the two countries. On the contrary, as Schlesinger writes of this incident: 'The Congress may have other views', Kennedy said in May, 'but I think it would be a great mistake not to build it. India needs that steel'. Congress did have other views and Nehru, more sensitive now to the the President's problems, withdrew the project in the summer. Kennedy wrote him an appreciative letter early in September. 'I have been a strong supporter for Bokharo, and I am still', he said, but he feared that insistence on it would have eroded support for the aid bill, and he thanked Nehru for making things easier."

But Johnson showed distemper instead of diplomacy. Instead of arranging behind the scenes that Shastri himself should postpone his visit, which he would have—few people in India doubted that with the flare-up in Kutch it would be inconvenient for Johnson to play host to Shastri and Ayub—he announced public cancellation in a manner which amounted to deliberate insult. India would have understood other expressions of disapproval in the U.S.A. of military extravagance by India and Pakistan; both drew heavily on U.S. aid to keep their economies afloat. But of the personal affront to Shastri there was unanimous condemnation.

Worse followed. All American aid was suspended and wheat shipments slowed down when the September War broke out. This could have been done, and as it transpired, was in fact

done, for a number of reasons which would not only be understood but supported by most Indians. They are dissatisfied with the use India has been making of American and other foreign aid; therefore if the major aid-giver decided to have a closer look at the plans to make sure that aid was put to better uses, there would have been support for this kind of pressure. Specifically there would have been considerable support for any well-argued case against excessive and delay-making regulation of the economy, or for a higher priority for the inputs of agriculture; there would have been support for the U.S. decision, had it been presented in this light at the time, to hold up long-term PL-480 agreements until there was convincing proof that India would do more to help herself.

But the timing no less than the manner of decisions, the secrecy which surrounded the whole "pressure" process because Johnson was playing it all so close to his chest, left the door wide open to the grossest suspicion about his motives. U.S. officials, whether in New Delhi or Washington, not having a clue to the workings of Johnson's mind as they had to Kennedy's, only hummed and hawed when they were asked whether aid had been suspended to put political pressure upon India on behalf of Pakistan. But this only underscored the worst fears in the Indian minds. The suspicion was wrong, but it was powerful; so powerful that it drove out of the minds of most Indians the more legitimate suspicion, also political but more plausible and worthy because of its stake in this area, that the U.S.A. was pressing *both* India and Pakistan to stop the hostilities, establish a cease-fire, and promise that even if they could not live as good neighbours they would at least live as peaceful ones and not ruin their own and southern Asia's future by reckless military adventure. These, like the economic motives, also would have been welcomed by many people in India; but they were smothered by the one suspicion, that India was being pushed towards a surrender to Pakistan, which never fails to provoke a united and embattled mind in India. The result was that such support, not negligible by any means, as Johnson's real motives might have picked up was lost.

Indian leaders on their side showed no better understanding of the need to avoid friction wherever avoidable. They did little to allay public fears and prejudice even after clearer

signals of Johnson's policies had begun to reach New Delhi. Suspicion was allowed to harden into conviction before Shastri decided to tell anyone that U.S. motives were being misunderstood. It was not until December 10 that Shastri made his first friendly reference in public to the U.S.A. for months or his Food Minister, C. Subramanian, denied that there were any strings to the wheat supplies. But by that time Shastri had only one month of his life left to him, and only three weeks of it in India. It was too short a time to clear up the accumulation of ill feelings for the U.S.A. though he made an opening, and from Tashkent communicated a warm message to Johnson.

But since the September War the climate had begun to improve for India's foreign policy; fears were being laid to rest and some opportunities opened, though full use was not being made of them. U Thant's report to the Security Council had left no one in any doubt that Pakistan started the trouble with the infiltrations into Kashmir in August. Therefore Security Council debates from September 5 onwards were more embarrassing for Pakistan than India, for the first time since the early 'fifties when Pakistan was asked to withdraw its army from Kashmir, whose presence there it had vehemently denied. All U.N. resolutions passed in September and October last year gave more satisfaction to India than Pakistan in three important respects: they gave priority, as India did but not Pakistan, to a stable cease-fire over political discussions; the political task they prescribed was discussion of all disputes, as India demanded, not only of Kashmir or at least Kashmir first, as Pakistan insisted; and they broke out of the confines of the U.N. resolutions (calling for a plebiscite in Kashmir) passed in the course of the 'fifties, which India had objected to at the time and then finally rejected in 1957.

These differences between last year's and earlier debates were not matters of technical or procedural detail but of substance, reflecting the new U.S. and Soviet appreciation of the changed situation in southern Asia and the growing approximation of their respective viewpoints. Earlier debates in the U.N. had reflected the tussle between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. for the allegiance of southern Asia; now they reflected their shared interest in the stability of this area. It mattered less to them whether Kashmir was part of India or Pakistan than that

neither should disturb the peace of the area. Whoever did was on their wrong side, therefore Pakistan was, and the offence Pakistan gave them was the greater because of the clear instigation of China behind it. The offence was to increase in the succeeding months as China, with arms supply, made its intimacy with Pakistan still more obvious. The situation was to become double-edged for Mrs. Gandhi: while objecting to China's collusion with Pakistan, the U.S.A. and Russia were also going to step up their wooing of Pakistan, Russia's growing desire to be friend of Ravalpindi was going to be a cause of uneasiness for Mrs. Gandhi in the summer of 1966 just as it was for Shastri in the summer of 1965. But the present result was the blunting of Pakistan's pressure upon India: on the one hand Pakistan increasingly found that being known as China's friend was of no advantage either in the parlours of the Big Two or in the assemblies of the non-aligned or Afro-Asians, on the other hand domestic repercussions in Pakistan caused political instability, leading to large-scale unrest in East Pakistan and the virtual dismissal of Bhutto by Ayub.

In the overall balancing of domestic and foreign policies, Ayub had to face an acute dilemma. If he did not live up to the Tashkent Declaration he would fall foul by the Soviet Union and world opinion generally. If he did, he would have to admit to his people even more frankly than he had that the war with India had been fought in vain and not only Kashmir but nothing else had been gotten out of it except the shattered pride of its army. The transition was proving very difficult for him from the war which Bhutto had promised would go on "for a thousand years" until Kashmir was won, to a peace of which the immediate task was to clear the Indian army out of Pakistan territory.

The U.S.A. and the Soviet Union were still disturbed by the continuing dispute between India and Pakistan, and both saw the primacy of Kashmir in any settlement. In this respect they still held to their earlier views. The U. S. A. obviously did not abandon another view also, that on the whole India had not been able to establish her credentials with the people of Kashmir and therefore with the rest of the world on this issue. Such deviation as occurred in the Soviet view was probably adverse to India. It stood less clearly on India's side though if



it had to make a straight choice between India and Pakistan she would still choose India, notwithstanding the procedural parity she accorded India and Pakistan with meticulous care at Tashkent and the further courting of Pakistan later. But both the Big Powers shifted their objectives in this area. They were no longer interested in promoting any particular solution of the Kashmir problem, as the United States once was, and even less in imposing their views either upon India or Pakistan. They were far more willing to leave it to the local compulsions of the situation to throw up an answer, hoping that both countries and the opposition in Kashmir would make a realistic appraisal of the circumstances. For their part they had a far clearer appreciation than before September that for the stability of the sub-continent, which became their primary concern now, promoting India's stability was at least as important as giving Pakistan satisfaction over Kashmir. Therefore no attempt appeared to be likely by either of them—by any one in fact, except China and Pakistan—to promote anything with regard to the Indo-Pakistan equation that would be outside the limits of India's tolerance.

This could have been as clear in the autumn of 1965 as it became a year later. That is what makes it all the more deplorable that a black cloud of ill-will which was entirely uncalled for and unjustified by facts was allowed to lie over Indo-U.S. relations. But it began to dissolve as the events of the following winter and spring unfolded themselves. There was to be a fresh set-back a little later.<sup>1</sup> But for the time being Indian opinion was mollified by the reception Ayub got when he went to Washington in December. That the reception was chilly might have satisfied the superficial. The more deeply observant were glad to see that the joint communique issued by Johnson and Ayub, apart from being silent on resumption of economic and military aid to Pakistan, made no direct reference to Kashmir and spoke only of a "peaceful resolution of all outstanding differences". In so far as it referred to the U.N. resolutions it went only as far back as September. Its silence with regard to earlier resolutions was even more significant than the Security Council's. There the Soviet presence

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 439 ff.

might have inhibited, it could be thought, positions which were unacceptable to India; the joint communique was under no such restraint.

Secondly, the United States expressed in December as enthusiastic and sincere good wishes for the success of the Tashkent summit as any other country, and gave as hearty a welcome as any country to its principal outcome, which was the abjuring of force, withdrawal by India and Pakistan from each other's territory, disengagement in depth and arrangements for the resumption of direct negotiations between the two countries over the whole range of their disputes. The change in the U.S. attitudes was certified in Indian eyes by the shock felt in the U.S.A., as great as in any country friendly to India, over Shastri's death. There was no mistaking the fact that the shock was as much over India's bereavement as over the death of a man who would have worked sincerely and probably with success for peace and stability in southern Asia.

That is why it is a major tragedy of Indo-U.S. relations that Shastri's visit to the United States which was to follow Tashkent did not take place. It would not only have been a more effective encounter than the one cancelled in the summer, but probably a historic meeting between two important people, each riding a tide in his affairs. Even the irritations between them over Vietnam abated. Johnson had entrusted to Shastri the delicate mission of convincing Soviet leaders when he met them at Tashkent that the United States was sincere in seeking peace in Vietnam. A few days before his death in Tashkent on January 11 Shastri wrote to Johnson that he had conveyed to his hosts his own conviction at any rate about the sincerity of the U.S. President.

As Kashmir fell back in the perspective of Indo-U.S. relations, conditions became ripe for Indian diplomacy to be released from the narrow confines of the Indo-Pakistan problem and out again into the broader issues of world diplomacy. Here the climate was far better now for a country like India than it was through Nehru's later years. In 1965, the United States was passing through, as it has been since, a highly educative experience in Vietnam. It was being converted to the view, more truly than any preaching of non-alignment could have done, that stability is not promoted by getting entangled or

entangling other countries in military pacts. It depends much more upon the growth of indigenous institutions and effective association between indigenous forces.

Simultaneously, other countries were learning—from India's experience, from the conclusive evidence of China's incitement behind Pakistan, from some of China's doings in Cuba and Africa, from the turmoil in Indonesia apart from the agony in Vietnam, from China's denunciation of the Soviet plea for peaceful co-existence—that the Peking Man was much more a threat to their peace than they, like India, had realized earlier. This made them more receptive, certainly it made India more receptive, to ideas of regional co-ordination in the interests of stability. Here was an opportunity for India to reverse her estrangement from the non-aligned countries, especially with her regional neighbours, which had begun at Belgrade under the pressure of China's diplomacy among the Afro-Asians.

Shastri did not live to make much use of the opportunity, but before his death India's standing among her former associates had already started taking a turn for the better. To some extent it had improved in the summer of 1964, when India alone among the Afro-Asian countries showed itself able to absorb the loss of the father figure inherited from the days of the fight for independence. But it improved further in 1965. Some improvements were visible before the September War ended: at the Casablanca conference Nasser blocked Pakistan's efforts to get a reference to Kashmir included in the conference communique. In the first week of October President Radhakrishnan made a highly successful tour of some East European and African countries; the joint communique with Tito is one of the best international documents from India's point of view. And in the Afro-Asian gathering at Algiers in October, it was seen that India was no longer playing a hesitant hand as at Belgrade, but a confident if not a forcing one.

In the beginning of 1966, in the midst of a more intense tragedy than Nehru's death, India showed a further display of the stability of her leadership and won further acclaim. Because it came suddenly at the height of achievement, not lingeringly, at the end of a slow and pathetic decline, Shastri's death was a greater shock than Nehru's; the sense of loss was deeper. For a time there was bewilderment, because no successor to him

was as clearly marked as he was to Nehru, and the doubts were stronger whether the transition would be peaceful. In the event it was not only peaceful but showed that the political system was strong enough to withstand the strains of a contest. This was one of the many signs that Shastri passed on to his successor a more going concern than he inherited. To these Mrs. Gandhi added her own advantages of birth, name, upbringing and close association with Nehru, and in spite of an embarrassingly hesitant start, more quickly gave India an assertive Prime Minister than Shastri was able to.

The performance conveyed its meaning to countries which had a friendly interest in India's continuing stability; tokens of their recognition were not long in coming. After a tour of India in the winter, a team of seven U.S. senators headed by Wayne Morse declared on their return home that the interests of the U.S.A. were closely tied with India's "not only because of its strategic location but because it is the most populous nation in the world which chooses its government by free elections". Their estimate improved the chances of large-scale resumption of U.S. aid for India, to which Senator Tydings gave big support in March. On the eve of Mrs. Gandhi's visit to the U.S.A. in March, Americans were therefore in a highly receptive mood towards India, which she and Johnson succeeded in consolidating by the extreme cordiality of their personal encounter. She was equally successful with the other statesmen she visited in the course of this tour—De Gaulle, Wilson and Kosygin—and when she came back home she returned, rather like her father, with the acclaim she had won abroad ringing loud in Indian ears. A few weeks later she received the accolade which all Indians value and many regard as the certificate of acceptance for a non-aligned leader, a joint invitation to talks by Tito and Nasser, Nehru's companions at the Brioni summit.

If this is where India stood at the start of the Prime Ministership of Mrs. Gandhi, why all the gloom a bare twelve months later? As it approached the second decade of freedom, the country survived a spell of adversity which should have finished it off but did not. It survived the shock of the death of two Prime Ministers, three wars, the worst drought of the century, the sudden suspension of foreign aid just when the Fourth Plan was in the making and the Third completing the final and in

some ways most critical lap. If in spite of all that, India not only survived but in some respects improved both performance and policies, why the title of this book? Why Uncertain India when the country has shown so much ability to cope with crises?

# UNCERTAIN INDIA

## FALSE ALARMS

SHASTRI died at a moment in his career when he too had become, in his unassertive way, the country's most dominant personality, to whom government and the ruling party looked up for decisions, whose presence became a reassurance for the people. Whether or not he was as great as Nehru at his greatest, he was at least as effective in his last few months as Nehru at any time since the end of the 'fifties. Therefore his death generated at least as acute a condition of uneasiness and uncertainty, which became worse instead of better with time as month after month of Mrs. Gandhi's reign followed without her inspiring much confidence among the people. By the time her first Prime Ministership was half way through, the comment became both vocal and widespread that she herself was the cause of the rapidly growing misgivings about India's future. The comment became sharper in the wake of the Congress debacle in the fourth General Election. The inadequacies of her leadership began to be blamed for it.

This comment, however, was very far from true. Partly it was inspired by those who wished to discredit her for their own reasons. Partly it fed on the habit of the popular mind to believe that whatever of importance follows a conspicuous occurrence must have been caused by it. So were all troubles and doubts traced to Nehru's death until resurgence occurred in the wake of the September War with Pakistan; so was the virtue of Shastri's leadership identified with his winning that war though it had made a convincing appearance much earlier and was only waiting to be recognised. Mrs. Gandhi has indeed failed, unlike Shastri, to cure the malady of doubts. But she is not its cause.

In the first place, her performance is a great deal better than her critics allow, notwithstanding the weaknesses she displayed in handling certain issues, such as the devaluation of the rupee and her unsuccessful effort in June last year to dislodge two of her Cabinet colleagues from their key portfolios. But within

the short time that she has been Prime Minister, she has taken more decisions—whether they are right or not depends upon one's point of view and is irrelevant to the question whether she is a decisive person or a fumbler—and taken them more promptly than either of her two predecessors within comparable time. Many of them are unpopular, but most err, if at all, on the side of liberal and contemporary values, confirming the expectations aroused on her appointment as Prime Minister, and show her mind to be uncluttered by dogma or prejudice. In the manner of taking them she appears to waver at times ; in the past few months she has been much less decisive than earlier. But Shastri also wavered on corresponding occasions, and she cannot overlook, any more than Shastri could, the overriding fact that in a country so full of strongly clashing prejudices, the core of a policy is best preserved by a willingness to adjust it at the margins.

In the second place, India passed the stage some time ago when her future could be made or marred entirely by the quality of leadership provided by one person. Effective leadership still matters, as it does in all countries. But it matters more in the manner that it may (or may fail to) fill the gaps or provide a focus, not as the prime cause of such a large event as the country's collapse or consolidation. For that India now depends, like other countries, upon the operation of much larger forces, in which masses of people participate, not one or two individuals; upon institutions, which have now become bigger than those who preside over them for the time being. It is in these larger forces and institutions that after Nehru's decline India's hopes resided ; it is there that most of the uncertainty now lurks.

What has distinguished India most from all other countries which have become free since, let's say, the United Nations was founded (just to pick a date) is that her political and constitutional fabric, more than any other's, bears the clear stamp of legitimacy. The clearest evidence of this is in the complete supremacy of the world's most detailed constitution ; anything done in contravention of it, even if it is done by a Parliament which in all other respects is sovereign, can be and often has been struck down by the Supreme Court. Many of the judgments of that Court have caused acute discomfort to the Government ; Nehru himself was most indignant about some. But its

anger is powerless against the written word of the Constitution, a document which Congress leaders did as much as anyone else to write, thus erecting a barrier against the arbitrariness in which they could have indulged if they had wished; no one could have forced a limitation upon their power in those days. It is true that they have often—far too often—used their majority in Parliament to amend the Constitution and make it conform to the Government's policies and decisions. But the amendments themselves have been the product of the will of the people, as clearly and legally determined by the barometer of elections; the bulk of the important ones are the result of the popular verdicts in favour of reorganisation of States according to language, and a ceiling upon the size of landholdings.

Except for the use of force to bring about the accession of Hyderabad, to cope with the rebellion in Nagaland, and to end Portuguese rule in Goa—the use of force in Kashmir is not listed here because it was held back until Kashmir had lawfully acceded to India; Pakistan's attack could then be treated as aggression—nearly all major changes which have occurred in India in the past twenty years have been wrought by legitimate processes, in keeping with the laws and the Constitution. So the country was brought under a single unified administration which replaced the complex diversity of princely States. So was power balanced and divided between the federal centre and the federating units; the succession of governments achieved at the Centre and in the States; the Prime Minister chosen thrice within a little less than three years; the reigns of government transferred from the Congress party, which was once all-pervasive, to non-Congress parties in eight States, three of them constituting a critical cluster in eastern India, two each in the South and North, and the eighth the largest and most conspicuous State in Indian politics. So, too, the relations between the elected representatives of the people, the armed forces and the civil bureaucracy were given a shape which the world over is recognized as the hall-mark of the legitimacy of a country's political system. So was a broad consensus evolved between all the major political forces on the apparatus by which the country should be ruled. Within this there was another consensus, however loosely defined, about the general direction of the Government's economic, social and foreign policies; even



when this began to fade away, wide agreement persisted on the methods by which the direction might be changed by those who wished to change it.

The result of all this was not fair shares for everyone or even the basic minimum of social and economic justice; many millions do not have it as yet. But no one was pushed so hard, at least in comparison with what he had known before, and no one was so denied hope of redress through the legitimate means, however slow they may be, of social and economic change that he should have to resort to illegitimate means. Legitimate outlets for protest came into being, and whether the voice of protest was promptly heeded or not—in the best few of the Years of Nehru it was not only heard and heeded but quite often anticipated, at any rate as far as the direction of the Government's policies was concerned if not the net result of the actions taken in their name—it had some impact, however delayed and feeble, in the quarters where the power of remedy lay.

This was the greatest contribution which Nehru and the Congress, when both were at their height, made towards the evolution of present-day India once the territorial survival of country had been accomplished in the first three years of independence. It was a greater contribution than secularism or socialist planning or non-alignment or the breath of modernity which Nehru imparted. The ground was prepared for it by the voluntary limitation of their powers by Congress leaders, its vehicle was the system they set up for history's largest democratic elections, a harness of unequalled size, fit only for the world's most numerous electorate. So long as this enormous engine was at work—the past tense does not necessarily imply that it has ceased to already—there was assurance for everyone that any sizeable impulse in any part of the country had the means available to it to make its presence felt. This itself ensured and brought about the increasing participation of the people in an entirely legitimate process of contributing their mite to that total complex of forces from which the government's policies should emerge if they are to be viable in a democratic sense and if the country wishes to avoid going up in an explosion of illegitimate forms of protest. This, in fact, is how policies did emerge, either after the impulse had powerfully manifested

itself, as in the demand for the linguistic reorganization of States, or in anticipation thereof as in the case of many economic policies; either way a safety valve took shape which prevented discontents from exploding with lethal effect.

But over the past eighteen months or so, many signs have gathered which would suggest that the danger has not been entirely averted, and this is the crux of the uncertainty about India's future. It does not yet seem that everything is lost. Far from it. If it had been, the title of this book would have been cast in more dire terms. But that assurance of steady growth towards perceivable ends through legitimate means has faltered. The best possible may yet happen; the chance that it will is still a little bit greater than that it will not. But the worst possible also peeps in through the wings.

It is sometimes argued that the greater danger to India is her poverty, that however well the safety valve may have functioned so far, it is bound to burst under the growing pressure of economic discontents and rising expectations. This view of India's future will probably grow, especially abroad, now that the Fourth General Election has brought all the tensions of federalism boiling up to the surface. The Congress Government at the Centre, already feeble in comparison with the economic tasks which it faces, will find it still more difficult than at any time in the past to get from State governments, half of them now in the hands of parties which are opposed to the Congress, that degree of support without which economic progress is impossible. Economic discontents and federal tensions, it will be thought, are bound to create such schisms in Indian society that it will disintegrate in the midst of secessions. Both these dangers, economic and political, are serious. At the risk of undertaking a lengthy digression from the main argument—which is that the primary danger lies in the growing illegitimacy of public life—they should be considered at this moment. That will help the real threat to India's future to stand out more clearly in the concluding pages of this book.

Since about the spring of 1965, India's economy has been faced with the triple crisis of food shortage, growing dependence upon foreign aid and both industrial and agricultural stagnation. The trap set by the ever-widening gap between food production and demand is too well known to need any more

comment than has been made in earlier chapters. With a record food production of more than 88 million tons India imported in 1964-65 nearly 7½ million tons, raising the available total to just short of 96 million tons; domestic production of that size is still only a distant objective (the following year's production was down by about million tons). But even with that much stock in hand the country barely managed to get by; no sizeable amount could be put aside for the future. Since then two successive years of drought have brought some parts of India, especially Bihar, to the brink of a famine; tragedy can only be averted with the help of massive food imports. While supplies have been coming in (mainly from the U.S.A.) on the same generous scale and terms as in the past, India's inability—some aid-givers go to the extent of calling it unwillingness—to help herself is causing a great deal of impatience in many world capitals, and in Washington there is a growing insistence upon a change of direction in India's economic thinking. Some of the changes insisted upon plainly do not make sense, such for example that India should switch land from cash crops to food, which could be very harmful for India's foreign trade balance, such as it is. Some seem more sensible when they are seen in the American context than Indian. Some would go down far better if they were to be seen to be the product of Indian thinking rather than American pressure. All of them have been a strain upon Indo-US relations, which in turn has cast a shadow upon prospects of foreign aid.

Monetary aid has also run into many difficulties of its own. In the wake of the clash between India and Pakistan, there was a ruinous pause in the aid already promised and committed which sent India's revenue and production indices plummeting. The pause, as seen from India, was so iniquitous that the President of the Associated Chambers of Commerce, H. K. S. Lindsay, a well-known spokesman of the British industrial community, criticized the U.S.A. for continuing it despite the evidence already given by India of being ready to 'do' whatever the U.S.A. was believed to be expecting of her to put her economy right. The Government panicked into measures it had resisted till then. It ordered a slow-down in planning though it did not admit that. It detached the first year from the Fourth Plan period and gave it a plan budget lower than in the last

year of the third Plan. "I just don't know how we can go forward", the Planning Minister moaned. Soon after it became obvious that there would be no Fourth Plan; up to now there is none.

It turned out later that the pause was only a minor complication for India compared with what lay behind it: drastic rethinking in the U.S.A. about the whole concept of foreign aid. Even such a sympathetic pundit of the philosophy of foreign aid as John Lewis had been saying for some time "There is no reason in principle . . . why American negotiators, having due regard for the net impact on relations between the two countries and upon India's overall development prospect, should not make specific aid offers contingent upon the institution of particular adjustments in indigenous rural policy . . . . It does not diminish the legitimacy (although it does underscore the delicacy) of such bargaining to charge it with 'tying strings'". Now this became the official U.S. approach, whether "delicate" or not, with the difference that less heed was paid to Lewis's provisos about mutual relations than he had urged, and "adjustments" began to be demanded of India in much wider areas than only "indigenous rural policy". The results were severely aggravated by two other circumstances: the timing and manner of "tying strings" was such that, as already recounted, it caused suspicions in India which were as poisonous as they were plausible, and these arose at a time when powerful forces had again surfaced in India which were only too eager to expose and exploit them.

Very plausibly—and as far as goodwill in India for the United States is concerned, very damagingly—they were able to make use of the fact that in spite of India being clearly in step with U.S. expectations, there was no sign of the resumption of American aid for upwards of a year. India gave every evidence of her willingness to live up to the Tashkent Declaration, and short of giving up Kashmir to do everything to settle her disputes with Pakistan. Liberalization of the economy and re-arranging of priorities as the U.S.A. and the World Bank desired had been initiated by Shastri; Mrs. Gandhi's Government showed itself eager to press ahead with these changes. Yet the delay in resuming aid continued, doing serious and probably irreversible damage to India's economy. Hence a sullenness towards the

U.S.A. which was only temporarily relieved by the cordial reception given to Mrs. Gandhi by President Johnson early in 1966; anti-U.S. opinion-makers had no difficulty in embarrassing her publicly with the taunt that while she had been feasted India continued to be starved of aid in spite of her visit and effusive praise of the President.

In fact, the warmth of the reception was quickly followed by a severe chill in May and June. The project announced by President Johnson during her visit, for setting up an Indo-US Educational Foundation out of blocked P.L. 480 funds, fell upon such unprepared soil in India that it was quickly swallowed up by the weeds of political controversy. The worst possible motives were attributed to Washington and the Foundation suspected of being a cover for a nest of C.I.A. men posing as Professors. But the framers of the scheme did not help much either. They wrote into its control mechanism features which, however, understandable and justifiable in their limited context, seemed oblivious of the larger context of the climate of Indo-U.S. relations.

A more serious example was the severe controversy over devaluation throughout the summer of 1966. The lever of foreign aid was used, with what should really be described as diplomatic blindness, to persuade India to devalue the rupee. Devaluation itself had many virtues and numerous advocates in India. But when it came out, despite the Government's initial efforts to conceal it, that devaluation had been exacted as the price for non-project aid, the fat was truly in the fire. The economic advantages of devaluation were lost in the heat of the protests against the alleged twisting of India's arms, "yet once more" as everyone said. Either devaluation should have been brought about differently or deferred till after the elections. As it turned out, with elections only nine months away, a first-rate political weapon was placed in the hands of the left critics of the Government, and they made good use of it to show that India's leadership was weak and ineffective and should be thrown out.

A very genuine anxiety began to grow that the political confrontation between labour and capital, between the left and right, would become tighter just when India—and Mrs. Gandhi—could least afford it. Seeing the door opened by devalua-

tion and the promise of large-scale imports with the help of non-project aid, the business community licked its lips and prepared to demand more and more concessions to private enterprise as the price for pushing up production. Since the Government's survival now turned upon more production and exports its bargaining position was very low. The trade unions, seeing the climate made favourable by the fear of rising prices among workers, began to think in terms of large-scale strikes. For the Communists the opportunity seemed particularly favourable. If they could tie up industry just long enough with strikes, they would hurt industry, acutely embarrass the Government, ruin the chances of devaluation succeeding and thus in the public mind heap upon the Americans the blame for imposing it upon India in the first place. All these things happened in the months between devaluation and the elections; all played their part in influencing the results. Here was an outstanding example of severe damage done to Indo-U.S. relations by U.S. decision-makers trying to do the right thing in the wrong way. The mistakes begun with the abrupt cancellation of Shastri's visit to the U.S.A. were continuing.

For its part the leadership responded with ineptitude and frailty. It knew that certain economic policies of the past had failed and needed to be changed: they had subordinated the needs of production to ideology's and assumed managerial competence in the bureaucratic machine which it did not possess. The result was that even when aid was flowing in freely the economy was limping. Realization of this grew in the Congress from about the time of the Durgapur session of the Congress, and the Government began to change its priorities. But instead of attributing the chances to this new realization it blamed them upon American pressure, perhaps to escape the responsibility for the changes in the eyes of those who were screaming that Nehru's successors were betraying his socialism. The charge and the escapist response have been even more marked under Mrs. Gandhi than they were under Shastri. The Government has earned none of the credit it should have for profiting from mistakes; instead it has attracted added blame for weakness. This has also made the aid-givers' pressure seem more severe than it has been. Or it may even have tempted the donors to increase the pressure, seeing how easily

the Indian leadership gave in, or believing genuinely that they were rescuing it from the dilemma of wanting to do something but not wanting to admit it. The result has been a tremendous build-up of public sentiment against the aid-givers and a weakening of Mrs. Gandhi's position because she is—unjustly—accused of selling her father's principles for the sake of aid. Hitherto she has managed to put up a plucky fight. But the strain on her and on the political fabric is increasing.

Even before the age of strings began, foreign aid had become a subject of serious anxiety; India's dependence upon it was rapidly escalating without a corresponding rise in the ability to meet its obligations or to use it effectively. Planning has continued on the wrong road it took many years ago and has progressively become more capital-consuming, ambitious beyond the limits of India's performance capacity, addicted to projects which in turn create their own demand for foreign aid. There is no foreseeable end to this vicious spiral; the Government's promises to end it have proved so unreliable in the past that they do not inspire any confidence now. It seems hardly believable today that dependence upon foreign aid will ever taper off unless there is a drastic change in planning priorities and methods. When consortium aid started in 1958, it was believed that India would be over the hump by 1970-71. But three-fourths of the way through this period she does not yet know where the top of the hump is. Exports, rarely more than about half the size of imports, have slumped further; to balance the budget she still needs as much foreign exchange as aid as she earns by trading. This gap will widen, not shrink, if export earnings do not rise faster than debt repayment obligations, which accounted for less than one-seventh of the second Plan foreign aid but one-fourth of the third Plan aid. A year after devaluation, chances of exports rising are as bleak as before, if not bleaker.

Many economists believe that panicked by a peep into this enormous pit, the Government has gone in for reckless borrowing, even on terms which it knows it cannot afford. This is neither good politics nor good economics. On the other hand it is refusing to take the hard and straight road but the only one which can see it through: to use domestic resources on a larger scale than it is doing, to learn to do without some of

the avoidable imports upon which money is still wasted (though much less than before) and to reduce the domestic consumption of everything which stands a chance as an export. Since this is not being done, dependence upon foreign aid is enmeshing itself ever deeper into the total economy; if it were as suddenly switched off two or three years hence—as it was two years ago, the result would be unimaginable confusion.

But although this problem is quite obviously enormous, it is very unlikely that there will be the same confrontation again between economic attitudes in the U.S.A. and the reality of Indian conditions as has clouded relations between the two countries—which are still the key to the attitude of many sources of foreign aid—over the past two years. The circumstances responsible for the cloud were peculiar to the domestic politics of the two countries and are not likely to recur. President Johnson's style is still abrasive enough to hurt, his policies still such an enigma wrapped up in the riddle of the moods that they cause avoidable misunderstandings. But his style has lost the shock of surprise on the one hand. On the other, India is not likely—unless there is a grave disturbance of the present balance of political forces—to resist reasonable conditions upon foreign aid and the donors are not likely to impose unreasonable ones, though here and there differences may occur on what is reasonable.

Mrs. Gandhi has been much more forthright than either her father or Shastri in defending foreign aid and the conditions upon which she can get it. In fact, she has had the courage to declare that if the country's interests required it she would not hesitate to change her father's policies, just as she had the courage to tell an American audience earlier that only a centrist government with a broad sympathy for the left could be stable in India. Asoka Mehta, himself a leading economist and at one time the best known Indian theoretician of socialism, has been equally energetic in giving sound, persuasive and hard-headed reasons for such changes as are being made in planning concepts to make them more productive and less ideology-bound. The emergence of strong, right-oriented groups in Parliament, though it aggravates a problem which has been discussed a little later, will encourage planning to become more realistic, pragmatic, and problem-oriented. The shape of



things to come has been indicated already by many spokesmen of the Government, but the change of emphasis was given the most authoritative expression when the President, inaugurating the fourth Lok Sabha and outlining the new Government's programme, said on March 18 "The Planning Commission will be reorganized. The working of controls will also be reviewed: those found unnecessary will be withdrawn and others readjusted as may be required to make them more purposeful and efficient". Much in the manner of foreign aid experts who have been urging India to fill critical gaps so that the heavy investments already made may begin to be productive, the President said "The considerable potential and capacity in various sectors of the economy built during the past years must be more fully utilised". He promised "special attention" in future to "those industries which contribute most to rapid development in the immediate future, particularly to industries which will be helpful to our agriculture and exports". During the first three Plans "substantial investments" had been made in the public sector; "it is important that these are now made to yield greater profits to sustain further development".

The economy itself is more ready now to respond to such an approach. Past excursions into over ambitious planning may be ready to yield some dividends now; the Ranchi complex may be, to give one example. This heavy machine-building foundry and forge project, considered over ambitious even by the Russians who built it for India, will be able to turn out now a steel plant every year of a capacity—one million tons—equal to the total annual steel output in India when the first Five Year Plan started. Power generating capacity at that time was under two million kW. Soon India will be able to add from her own equipment manufacturing resources new power generating capacity of that order every year. There are other critical national assets also about which it is true that more has been added to them in a single plan period—in some cases a single year—than the total which existed in the early '50s, in some cases in the early '60s. Two examples, wide apart but each critical in its own area, are irrigation potential and technical education.

The shortage of food continues to be ominous. But this is much more the result of past sins than any present mistakes.

For all his faults, and these were many, the Food Minister whose head rolled in the fourth General Election, Mr. C. Subramaniam, had a clearer grasp of the problem and did more to solve it than anyone else who has ever held that portfolio in this country. Thanks to him, and the heightened realisation all around that this shortage could be ruinous, more potential has been created and a better strategy evolved to take advantage of it than would have appeared possible a few years ago; given a couple of good monsoons in succession, it might reduce the problem to a more manageable size. If anything is needed even more than rains, it is the effective mobilisation of rural manpower, which can only be done if there is a close and effective linkage between the political and administrative systems and of both with the mass of the people. The absence of such linkage is not an economic problem but a weakness of present-day Indian politics and society, which is also the main cause of the prevailing uncertainty about the future; economic discontents as such are not the primary source of danger.

This is also true of federal tensions. Relations between the centre and the States, frequently unpleasant even when the Congress was in power in all States (some State governments were, on occasions, as hostile to New Delhi and to the central leadership of the party as any non-Congress government could be) may now become more tense, affecting not only the handling of specific problems but the shape and scope of a wide range of policies. But this problem is different from the secessionism which is read into it.

What could be specially called the threat of secession is weaker today than at any time since independence began. In all the four areas where the demand for separation from India was vocal — Madras, Punjab, Kashmir and Nagaland — other issues have taken over. In Madras the DMK gave up the demand for an independent Dravidiṣṭān a few years ago. It may have done so because the Government of India made separatist demands illegal. But it had also begun to realise increasingly that some of its other demands were paving it more. Now it has been swept into power by the response it evokes from the younger generation and newer classes which are the product of the exposure of tradition-bound Madras to modern times.

Wielding power may rekindle in it some of its earlier ambitions. But the reverse is more probable: that it will be drawn deeper into the all-India web of power and responsibility in a federation of growing complexity and inter-dependence of units.

In Nagaland, years of warfare, frustrating for both sides, which was sparked off by the rebellious tribesmen's bid for independence, have been followed by several months of patient negotiations over the way in which Nagaland should agree to stay in the Union and the status it should have. Not all Nagas have ceased to be armed rebels; many still hanker for China's intervention. But the majority wish the negotiations and the cease-fire to continue. In Punjab, the only Sikh party which sometimes demanded a separate "homeland" status for the Sikhs has been trounced in the General Election by another Sikh party which intensely reaffirms its loyalty to the Union and had asked only for a Punjabi-speaking State like any of the other linguistically organized States. In Kashmir, a distinct change has occurred in the dominant public mood as a result of the fighting between India and Pakistan in 1965 and the General Election this year. The former had already convinced the Kashmiri people, if not Pakistan also, that unless the total Indian structure collapses Kashmir is not going to be snatched out of the Union by a military adventurer or an internal rebellion. The elections have shown this time—though still not as fair as they should have been, they have been a novel experience for a State which had so far known only the rigged up affairs that Sheikh Abdullah and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad had passed off as elections—that if they do not like a local government they have the power now to overthrow it instead of turning in venom against the Government in New Delhi which might be backing the Government in Srinagar. Since the elections, therefore, the division of politics in Kashmir has been between those who are in favour and those against the present Government there, not between those who are against and those in favour of remaining within the Indian Union. The latter division also persists, but with much diminished virulence; conditions are now ripe, if the leadership in New Delhi is—in subsequent months it has not given much proof that it is—for a settlement on the basis of increased autonomy for Kashmir but within the Union.

None of this implies that separatism has disappeared. But it has been sublimated into the normal problems of federalism—or to be more precise, the opportunity is at hand for it to be so sublimated if the political system as a whole and the democratic apparatus within it will show the requisite sound health and vigour. Some very encouraging tendencies have been thrown up by the elections.<sup>1</sup> In many States diverse parties have formed alliances to wrest power from the Congress. While they stay in power, which they are anxious to do as long as they can, they will rub each other's angularities off and learn not only to live with their diverse allies but also with the Government formed in New Delhi by a different party. Signs of the former process are visible already: non-Congress alliances have so far stood the strains better than a couple of Congress Governments in which the factions have fallen out. The Jana Sangh is now distinctly less rigid in Punjab in opposing the inclusion of Chandigarh in the State or in demanding that Hindi should immediately become the sole official language of the Indian Union. It has also agreed to State intervention in the foodgrain trade although much of its backing comes from the mercantile community. The Communists in the West Bengal Government are advising caution upon the more militant trade union organizations and the Swatantra Party, the dominant partner in the Government of Orissa is advocating policies contrary to its free enterprise philosophy. Signs of the second change will appear with time—if the give and take of politics, between the governments and the people and between one government, and another, does not go beyond the bounds of legitimacy. If it does not, tensions and differences will continue to be eased and ultimately resolved; they will not aggravate differences. But if it does, chaos may very quickly follow—which is the point from which this long digression began: that if the total political process evolves within the bounds of legitimacy, secessionism and poverty will not prove lethal; if it does not, the threat will not come from secession of parts but dissolution of the whole.

<sup>1</sup> More fully discussed on p 382 ff.

The source of the impulse for illegitimate protests lies precisely where the safeguard against it lay so far, in the state of relations between the Government and the people, which in this country still means relations between the Congress and the people. So long as these relations were good, they either obviated the need for protests (because the Government anticipated popular needs, via the party or directly) or cushioned their shock by diverting the impulse of protest into more legitimate channels. Virulent outbreaks of illegitimacy occurred even then, as in the widespread rioting which preceded the linguistic re-organization of States. But they were relatively short-lived interruptions of the more normal tenor of life. Few people had the feeling which most have now, of being surrounded by a sea of endemic violence, a perpetual abnormality of public behaviour. Whether the relations were normal because the people still had some affection left for the party which had fought for the country's freedom, or because the safety valve of elections still inspired hope of peaceful change of rulers, or because life was less burdensome or the Government sympathetic and therefore the protest milder, or because of the comfort which the presence of Nehru gave, the result was sense of normal and gradual change, free of disruptive or very unpredictable turns. The first factor counted most in the first decade of freedom, the second joined in from about the middle fifties, the third began with the end of the first Five Year Plan and did not lose ground until about the middle of the third Plan, the last held out until a little after the beginning of the sixties. But all of them, except the safety valve of elections have been disappearing one after another, and the cumulative effect has been slowly coming to a head in the past year or so it has burst upon the country.

The main reason for this is the growing alienation of the people from the Congress—not in terms of votes yet, because the Congress share of the vote in the fourth General Election was just under 4% lower than in the third. But in terms of regard for the Congress, in terms of the trust that if it is returned to power it will at least try to do better, in terms of the feeling that even if things are not improving, the Congress

is honestly trying to do all it can. If there had been a viable alternative to the Congress, people would have turned to it long ago for relief, pushed by the change in their feelings for the Congress. But the alternative, until new possibilities began to glimmer through the fourth General Election, was only an array of splinter parties, so that the protest vote, however large, was always ineffectual. Even on a minority vote the Congress continued to be secure in power, which only pushed the protest into illegitimate channels since the legitimate one of the ballot box was unable to help. Elements have always been at hand to assist the urge to illegitimacy by promoting disorders. But even without their help the Congress has been doing enough, or leaving enough undone, to ensure that one day the normal political process would turn abnormal and sour.

Lest the rise of abnormality should appear to be more sudden than it is, less supported by identifiable causes, it should be traced back, briefly, to its early origins. These lie in the first place in factional tussles in the Congress, partly personal, partly ideological; in the second place, they lie in a change which would have overtaken the Congress in any case as it moved from the colonial era to freedom but which was accentuated by the deterioration of the party's fibre.

In spite of the noise made from the party's platform by the so-called left Congressmen, than whom there are few more befuddled people in Indian politics and many of whom were rejected by the voters in the fourth election, the electoral machinery of the Congress is and has always been firmly in the hands of the opposite group. This has come about by action and reaction in the past twenty years; at each election the trend gets a little stronger than before in spite of the slogans used in the Congress manifestoes and in spite of the wide and stable support the slogans have had so far with the broad masses of the people whose poverty and aspirations make them sitting ducks for such emotive phraseology. The middle and higher ranks of the Congress have never been radical, a few renowned exceptions notwithstanding. They were predisposed for a start to their growing links with the middle reaches of the country, especially among rural classes; but the dynamics of the situation made the predisposition sharper. The reformist zeal

of the Congress, even at its height, was aimed only at the highest peaks of privilege, the Princes and the leading landlords (most captains of industry sided with the Congress). In combating them at elections it made alliances with people of middle privilege who were already its kith and kin in terms of their social standing and ways of thinking; in rural areas they were also the leaders of large voting blocks which were held together by caste or factions. The combination thrived: for the Congress in terms of votes, for its backers in terms of the benefits of public spending which, as discussed earlier,<sup>o</sup> were cornered by them and still are.

So it might have thrived a little longer were it not for the fact that the confrontation between those who have middle privilege and those who have none has very rapidly become tighter, especially since the 1962 elections. On the other hand, the present Congress leadership has lost the art which Nehru had perfected of making a little socialism go a long way. Concern for the poor is not less than in his days, its pursuit not more inefficient; on the contrary. But the political mileage to be gotten out of it has suddenly shrunk; phrases do not carry any one as far now as they did once, and even the phrases have deteriorated. Thus has alienation grown between the apex of political and administrative power and the social and economic base of the pyramid where the majority of the people live; the links of persuasion between them have grown weaker and each tends to address the other in the language of force.

The alienation has been the cause and effect, each feeding the other, of a rapid loss of one of its major functions by the Congress which Gandhi had summed up as "constructive work". Gandhi never considered his or the party's role to be purely political, that of winning independence; transformation of society was at least as important. Hence his campaigns, to which he harnessed the Congress, for prohibition, the abolition of untouchability, communal harmony; hence also the large network of organizations he created in and around the Congress, concerned with such things as home-spun cloth, village industries, the reform of education. These gave a depth and dimension to the Congress which its political work by itself would

<sup>o</sup> See page 226.

not have; they had the effect, if not also the intention, of making its political role more effective by bringing it into more energizing contact with the people.

It was natural that after independence came some of these functions should decay. The Congress was now the Government and many of these functions were functions of government; so unto Caesar. But the decay was also due to less acceptable causes. People began to look upon the local Congress leader not as a voluntary public servant as they used to, but as a paid public servant. Congressmen should have guarded against this tendency; it was drying up their contact with the people. But they too regarded themselves now not as servants of the people but masters of the Government. After having served the people they now expected to be waited upon. They forgot that although the constructive role of the Congress had been taken over by the Government, as the party in power the Congress still had a role not very different from the former one, of carrying the Government's programme to the people and the mood and needs of the people to the Government; in other words helping to end the Government's isolation from the people which an alien government could afford but not the Indian successor.

The Congress now should have become a mixture of the best in the Soviet Communist Party and the British Labour Party; instead it became a mixture of the worst in the Soviet and American party systems. In what was virtually a one-party state for many years, the Congress had to be not only the party behind the Government, giving the latter a broad framework of policy, as the British Labour Party does periodically, but an agency of the Government's programmes of social transformation. Instead, the Congress remained on the one hand as omnipresent as a totalitarian party and came to be content on the other hand with the business of fighting and winning elections. It narrowed down even the latter function to something like what happens at American party conventions, where the main business is not the Party's policies but nomination of candidates; many commentators found the parallel uncomfortably close between a Republican Party Convention in the U.S.A. and the A.I.C.C. session in a huge air-conditioned hall in Bombay last May. Since the support of the voter was assured in any case, getting the nomination became the most important battle.





Now, that chap in the dark suit—how has he managed to go abroad with all these restrictions on travel.



AGRICULTURAL  
DEPT.



It says by this food deal we will have no food shortage for the next five years! What do we do after that?



Gandhiji, Sir....

Given a few years more, this change in the Congress would have done no great harm. A genuine multiparty system would have had more time to grow, more clearly justifying the pre-occupations of the Congress with the sole business of winning elections. The administrative machinery of the Government, weakest when it comes to promoting social change, might have got more adjusted to the need for this change which the Government or the party in power must make if India is to cease to be a poor, backward and tradition-bound country. But years too soon the Congress abdicated all its functions except those concerned with nominating candidates and getting them elected. It became very skilful in patching up divided factions through compromises which free-wheeled quite independently of its alleged ideology; in hand-picking candidates to suit constituency conditions; in manipulating groups within other parties; in putting into motion, even if only in the nick of time, its election machinery which is ponderous but bigger than any party's, with branches and functionaries in every village even if they work only for five months in every five years. But it became most inefficient in thinking out where it wanted the country to go and in deciding how best it could get there. The results of this inefficiency are everywhere now, but they are most conspicuous in programmes aimed at persuading large numbers of people to move in new directions: in population control, in the co-operative movement, in rural uplift, in the massive repetition of small improvements in millions of farms, in panchayati raj and community development.

Other aspects of the tasks of development have added their own strains. All planning assumes control and regulation, and democratic planning their willing acceptance by the people. Where this acceptance is unavailable either planning goes or force sets in, and India has been standing uncertainly at this crossroads ever since the Third Plan ran into difficulties; sometimes there is more force, sometimes less planning. Where regulation means, as in India's conditions of scarcity it very often does, that people have to do with a little less of even the essentials of life, they have to be persuaded to accept the limitation; its necessity has to be explained to them convincingly. To some extent this can be done by the Government directly; it has the means to broadcast the necessary information at any

rate. But mere information is rarely enough; neither is it readily comprehended by the people nor are they easily converted to its message. There has to be a suitable agency for persuasive dissemination, which in India's conditions the Government cannot be: there are attitudes in India, some inherited, some generated more recently, which make the people resistant to any messages from the Government; also, the audience is so vast and scattered, so much of it is outside the pale of modern mass media, that if official disseminators alone were to reach it their army would have to be even larger than it is. This is where the Government most needs the party, which is supposed by its traditions to be in touch with the people; able to understand their difficulties and to explain the Government's to them.

But deprived of this help the administration proceeds in the only way it knows, by issuing a plethora of new rules and regulations, often under the emergency powers of the Government, many of them wholly out of touch with realities because the framers no longer have the feel of what happens to a fiat when it reaches the people. This is much worse than the controversial facts that the Defence of India Rules, a set of sweeping regulations, have remained in use long after the emergency needs for which they were evoked had passed, and that they have been used, even to the extent of suppressing Fundamental Rights, not only for the needs of defence but for the day-to-day business of the Government.

In the summer of 1965 the West Bengal Government, concerned over the shortage of milk, issued one order after another, each a bigger burden upon the enforcement machinery if people should choose not to obey it very willingly, to divert milk from the manufacture of sweets. This could have been more easily done by the use of the inducements which the price mechanism offers. But extraordinary powers were used instead because they were readily available. In all main cities all over the country all restaurants were barred from serving meals on Monday evenings. This was done to enforce an appeal which Shastri made late in 1965, that everyone should give up eating cereal foods on Monday evenings to help conserve foodgrains. Undaunted by the administrative impossibility of enforcing an order which covered every little tuck shop, and forgetting that

it discriminated against the floating population which could only go to restaurants—it had no private kitchens and ration-cards with which the permanent population, its conscience out of the reach of the law, could cook what it wanted on Mondays as on any other day—some State Governments took this absurdity many stages further. A Punjab regulation laid down that no person eating a meal in a restaurant could order more than two dishes or share them with a companion who may not have ordered them; if two people ate together they may not order four dishes of four different kinds but only of two kinds each! That most of these restrictions were quickly dismantled on the eve of the last elections does not prove that their absurdity was realised; only their unpopularity was.

On the one hand nothing prevented (or prevents) the enormous waste of food at parties and wedding receptions. On the other, thousands of people were thrown out of their jobs and thousands more inconvenienced by a single order of the West Bengal Government: it banned the trade of the man who carries on his head from morning till evening perhaps twenty rupees worth of cooked cereal foods, and for a profit of perhaps a few rupees a day meets the needs of forty or fifty office clerks and others who take a midday snack in place of lunch. When simultaneously with this large-scale evasion occurs, people who have money and influence working their way out of most restrictions, public temper reaches the ignition point. Violence breaks out, the strain on the administration multiplies ten-fold and its capacity for enforcing even the more essential regulations and respect for order reaches the breaking point; that it goes beyond is then ensured by extremist agitators or others whose interests are best served by disorder. This is not a hypothetical construction of what is possible but a description of what happened in West Bengal last year, when the most ominous disturbances since the Telangana rebellion occurred.

As the Government's dependence upon unrealistic regulation mounts, so does use of force, which in the past few years appears to have become the normal instrument of all kinds of policy: whether it be the linguistic division of a state, or the transfer of Government offices from one place to another, development of communications in isolated areas, securing land for a public purpose or proper distribution of essential commodities (each

of these generic descriptions relates to actual incidents), everything ends up as a law and order problem. The effect upon the administration in its lower rungs is disastrous. They find themselves isolated in hostile surroundings, unable to perform even those functions which would be immediately beneficial to the very people who resist them. There have been times when agitation has spread from a few malcontents to the community as a whole and the police, ordered to open fire, have resisted because it meant firing upon people they have known. The army has been called in on an increasing number of occasions, bringing the day nearer when the army may be looked upon and accepted by the people as the normal agency of governance. The discredit each such occasion brings upon the civil administration makes its functioning still more ineffective in future.

More often the chain of events is less dramatic but not less harmful, it erodes the normal order more slowly but as surely. As regulations escalate so does the search for loopholes if the people are not converted first to the purpose of the regulations. Evasion, which is not always difficult in a country of this size, becomes a habit with those who succeed in it once. Others look for hands willing to receive a little money, and the giving and receiving become a habit too. The cumulative result is contempt for the Government—as potent a cause of people's growing alienation from the Congress and its governments as the hatred aroused by the frequent use of force. These emotions are more responsible for the growing cracks in India's political structure than either the poverty of the people or the Government's inability to reduce it more quickly.

As these cracks grow, so does anxiety over what would seep into the body politic through them. Events of the past year or a little over, which I have used copiously to illustrate in the following pages, point to various possibilities, each more depressing than the rest, each able by itself to justify the title of this book. The anxiety has been eased a little by the latest elections; contrary to what is commonly believed abroad, they have released a few constructive possibilities, as I have suggested later. But in the meantime the more dark possibilities persist; in fact, they grow darker.

Insurrectionist motivation, though somewhat in check since the elections, continues to be at work beneath the surface,



mingling itself with any popular resentment especially economic, fanning illegitimacy by using every opening left for it by an administration (read Congress) which is most incompetent and callous at levels where it comes most into contact with the vast majority of the people. A somewhat greater possibility is a head-on clash between the extreme right and left; it would differ little from a civil war, limited or extensive in areas as circumstances may dictate, and the devastation would be extensive. Still greater is the possibility that the pull of regional loyalties, now reinforced by the fact that so many States are governed for the first time by parties opposed to the party which still holds the centre, may so weaken the federal structure that it collapses under its own weight.

Feeding this whole range of possible happenings in the future is the dismal fact, observable every day, that all norms of public behaviour are breaking down; things are being done, at the slightest provocation and at all levels of society which, if they persist, can cause the disintegration of society as a whole, and they are being done by many people who have neither any intention of bringing this about nor any idea of what they will put in its place if the present order collapses. This is the most important of the many causes of uncertainty which afflict India today, most able to reinforce other causes of uncertainty, and the first to be fed by them in turn.

Since about the beginning of the summer of 1966 it has seemed that almost any provocation, big or small, is good enough for deeds of lawlessness which in normal times would be considered impossible in any organized society. The cancellation of a local train (an annoying, unnecessary, but common occurrence) or even its late arrival leads to such a rash of attacks upon railway property, damage to electrical apparatus and signalling systems, that traffic on whole sectors is tied up. In one case a special target was made of a compartment carrying several Members of Parliament; a crowd surrounded it, threatened to set it and them on fire, and did not disperse until it had given the Members a thorough shaking. An engine driver who stopped his train near a village—to clear cattle from the track according to him, to steal fruit from trees according to the villagers—was attacked and left tied to a tree; the whole line was blocked for some hours while the railway

authorities at both ends wondered whether the train had disappeared.

In the first week of July last year, there was dramatic interference with train services in two wide apart areas. On July 3, at a railway installation only a mile away from Calcutta's main station for eastern services, unidentified persons snipped off and stole some underground cables which carry the signalling system. This halted fifty trains at their stations for four hours while the damage was detected and repaired. Two days later and ten miles from Calcutta, at a suburban station on westward services, a mob halted a Bombay-bound fast, main line train because it was given precedence over a local suburban train on this track. *The Statesman* report of this disturbance said "As the Bombay Mail was approaching Andul at about 10-20 a.m., a few minutes behind schedule, some demonstrators snatched a red flag from a railway employee and flagged the train to a stop. Others joined them and refused to allow the train to move. They demanded that senior railway officers come to the spot to explain the late running of trains. The communications system at the station was cut off and a telephone was badly damaged. The railway staff was not allowed to pass on any information to the divisional headquarters. A railway sweeper, who was carrying a message to the adjoining railway station, was mercilessly beaten. The angry crowd then forcibly entered the house of Mr. A. K. Dutta, the Assistant Station Master where the Station Master, Mr. P. K. Ghosh, had taken refuge. He was dragged out and assaulted. He sustained serious injuries and was admitted to the railway hospital at Garden Reach. The wife of Mr. Dutta, who resisted the entry of the crowd into her quarters, was also not spared. When I went to the station, she was still suffering from shock. By the time the police arrived on the scene, at about noon, the demonstrators had dispersed".

A day earlier, at a suburban station near Bombay, on a section which saw some bad railway accidents in the course of the summer, the passengers of a train and a non-descript mob turned violent because the engine driver stopped the train a little distance short of the platform. He stopped it because the yard was not clear yet and the signal showed red. The mob thought another accident had been narrowly averted and started throwing stones at the train and the station. The book-

ing office was set on fire and the cash box looted; a number of policemen, one officer, and some fire brigade men were injured.

The number and intensity of such incidents on the railways continued to rise through the rest of the summer and the beginning of winter until operational staff from station masters downward began an agitation of their own. Like the excited mobs in the West Bengal countryside during the food agitation, the operational staff also turned against the Government, or anything which would resemble authority higher than their own, not against those who had excited or practised violence against them. The grievance they fastened on was not that they felt that their personal safety was threatened but that the financial terms of their service were unsatisfactory. They launched a countrywide "go slow" movement and although they were to call it off by the end of the year, they succeeded immensely in adding to the frustrations of the travelling public—which in return retaliated with a further round of violence.

Train services began to be held up at many places, especially in West Bengal, by passengers (and those who passed for bona-fide passengers but probably were not) who squatted on the tracks, damaged signalling equipment, and violently assaulted railway staff who came to argue them out of it. In a typical chain of troubles at the beginning of December, eruptions occurred at several stations on a suburban line leading out of Calcutta because crowds had held up trains at earlier stations; self-combustion among waiting crowds then spread along the main lines which also used a part of this track. In the middle of December, the railway time-table was disrupted for a whole day on lines in the Calcutta region because a crowd demanding immediate doubling of capacity decided to paralyse such service as there was. At one point the station master was assaulted by irate passengers. Early in January a main line junction station was gutted by one crowd while another, about 400 strong, attacked and burnt down postal communications.

In this atmosphere of prevasive violence, even people and professions better known for more orderly reactions broke out into unpredictable behaviour. Over 1,400 doctors employed by the Bihar Government resigned in a body over a dispute about salaries, nurses walked out of all the major hospitals in Delhi

for a day, followed later by most of the Central Health Service doctors in Delhi, all the house surgeons in Government-aided hospitals in Cuttack and 1400 house surgeons and post-graduate medical students in Andhra; more than 130,000 teachers employed by the Kerala government struck work and all schools aided by the government had to shut down; all engineers of the Punjab State Electricity Board decided to quit their jobs; 30,000 businessmen staged a counterstrike in Bombay when their workers struck; the administration of the whole of U.P. was brought to a halt for 62 days because several thousand junior grade employees put their quills down; 15,000 Maharashtra government employees and 200,000 in West Bengal took mass casual leave to protest. The audience burnt down a cinema hall because the projector faltered; the management's offer to refund ticket money was ignored. Passengers joined others in burning four trams in Calcutta because a boy was killed under one of them. The manager of a hotel was suspected to have manhandled a boy; the hotel was burnt. Disorder reached a quite unexpected height when the police force in Delhi struck work, some detachments refused to surrender arms and some others surrounded the house of the Union Minister of Home Affairs.

In this general and widespread breakdown of all norms of public behaviour, the menacing countenance of two communities was particularly disturbing—students and labour. Nothing seemed too much for them to perpetrate, fired as they were by a combination of genuine grievances and economic distress, the greater vigour of the resentment in their tougher bodies, the feeling that they were in the vanguard of something or the other, some sense of rebellion which made appeals to their sense of responsibility powerless. Most of the time this heady exhilaration took mean and reprehensible forms. They did things for which each of them would have felt ashamed as an individual, but collectively they were immune against shame because of the abandon with which they behaved; in their eyes their deeds had the colour of revolution. They became ideal material for the diverse purposes of politicians.

Student rioting broke out in several towns in Assam in August last year; shops were burnt, whole streets ransacked; clashes occurred between mobs of boys and the

police; at least six persons were killed and more than a hundred were injured. Five students were killed and fifty injured in Jammu in October. In the same month, rioting occurred in Jullundher where the students of the biggest college in the city broke into the principal's office and burnt it; in another town in the same State they burnt a school and the library and laboratories of a college. A canteen was burnt at the Delhi Engineering College. In the next State, U.P., and next month, November, they burnt a post office in Merrut and in Allahabad fought pitched battles with the police, eighty persons being injured as a result. In the same month, a massive protest march planned by students proved a failure in Delhi (one of their demands was air conditioning) but they forced an engineering college to shut down in Trivandrum and an agricultural university in U.P.; the Osmania University in Hyderabad was damaged. Worse followed in Calcutta, in December: the principal of a college was imprisoned in his office for 30 hours, the chemistry laboratory of the city's most famous college and probably the oldest in the country was burnt. Very soon after that the Calcutta University, certainly the most important in India, had to be closed down indefinitely, throwing thousands more students into the street and disrupting the educational system of much of eastern India. A professor and a student were killed in Bihar in rioting which was sparked off by unfounded rumours; among the persons arrested for incitement was the General Secretary of the Communist Party of India. In January a student strike turned violent in Lucknow but more serious things, the worst in this chain, happened in Bihar: students observing "Anti-Repression Week" fought the police in Ranchi, attacked a railway station at Barh, broke into a hospital nearby and in the State capital, Patna, burnt buses and some buildings and mobbed the house of the Chief Minister; police opened fire repeatedly and nine persons were killed.

Labour unrest was acute throughout this period; it continues to be, and in fact, becomes worse as production indices decline, leading to retrenchment and lay-off, and the cost of living continues to soar. The violence resulting from it was, in comparison with what students were perpetrating, much less serious. Some bad eruptions occurred at a few places, but more serious was the heavy toll labour unrest took of the economy in many

parts of the country, tying up industries, services, in fact, whole cities, over disputes which were relatively trivial and either capable of being settled by other means or in the process of being settled. City transport in Calcutta was brought to a halt repeatedly—the trams for weeks on end—by wage disputes. Organized life suffered a total stoppage in many parts of West Bengal—most of all of course in the city of Calcutta—by a one-day general strike (or a "bandh", as it is called now; a new word in India's public life) in April last year and for a day and a half in September; all shutters were pulled down for a day in Bombay in August, and in large parts of U.P. in July and Bihar in August.

This stream of agitational behaviour is fed by a state of general unrest and distress, not by motives which are specifically political. But the latter can be seen in varying concentrations, in the neighbouring and more dramatically dangerous stream of what can only be described as coordinated mob violence. This may ostensibly be sparked off by economic hardship and the attitude almost of indifference towards it which has justly made some Congress governments infamous; if the attitude were different perhaps the violence would not occur or at least not assume such ominous proportions. But political motives give shape and direction to it. One example of the inter-related working of these tensions is the fury of the anti-Hindi agitation in Madras in February 1965: the anxieties of the educated unemployed among Tamilian youth played a part; so did the DMK's hope of political profit in its war with the Congress. But a better example are the disastrous—or famous, depending upon the point of view—food agitations of West Bengal in 1966.

Statutory rationing, in effect in Calcutta and many other major cities, the Government's only hope of disciplining the enormous consumer demand in the metropolitan cities so that prices do not get out of hand, hangs by the Government's capacity to harness the marketable surplus stocks of medium and main producers (the minor do not have enough for their own needs). Once again, since no attempt is made to practise persuasion, compulsory levies are imposed—or sought to be. But the middle and higher producers are the rural allies of the Congress. A powerful plea goes up on their behalf that they should not be touched. Sometimes this is blatantly said: a

senior office holder of the Congress Party in Parliament, a leftist in the topsy-turvy vocabulary of the domestic politics of the party, warned the Government to abandon the levy on cultivators because otherwise it would lose the elections. More often it is said by subtler implication. Or the situation itself makes the warning plain enough. The Food Department of the West Bengal Government issued instructions in April last year that the procurement of the marketable surplus must be tightened up and sterner measures taken against those who held back stocks. Government's officers in the districts made their reluctance very plain. Action was most needed, they pointed out, against cultivators who had considerable traditional influence and vested interests in the village; proceeding against them would not be easy. The offended cultivators had the means to show they were offended, and officials who refused to be impressed were not allowed to forget it. In the disturbances which broke out in the spring, one of the conspicuous elements at the start was assaults by hirelings of the main cultivators upon the levy officials and their offices. Evasion of the levy system by those who could evade it reached proportions which not only endangered arrangements for feeding excitable cities like Calcutta, bringing them also to the brink of explosion, but added to the resentments of those who had been forced by their weaker state to submit to the levy. The contrast, from which the maximum propaganda value was extracted by the left opposition, was probably the principal reason, apart from the chronic inefficiency of the Government and the uninhibited faction fights in the Congress, why the urban intellectual and white-collar classes in West Bengal also showed their complete alienation from Congress rule.

By the beginning of last year it was becoming clear that hardships and popular temper were rising. A few miles south of Calcutta violent disturbances against the Government broke out in January. They were not organized by any one in particular at this stage, but the signal of opportunity they hoisted was not lost upon the Communists. To the chronic neglect of the social environment in West Bengal by the Government, to the tinder provided by the large population of unrehabilitated refugees from East Pakistan, to the endemic violence which is never much below the surface in Calcutta, were being added

the specific causes of rising shortages and the Government's and the Congress Party's mishandling thereof. As the *Statesman* reported in an extensive diagnosis, to which the pages which follow are heavily indebted, "Not only is there almost universal complaint about the Government's failure to relieve the hardship, but few seem inclined even to credit the Government with any sincere intention to (relieve it)."

In main outlines the Government's food policy was right but its detail inept because it took meagre account of local situations; it led to "a virtual drying up of all foodgrain supplies in the village and small towns. To start with, the procurement prices are, in fact, too low to induce a farmer to sell any part of his produce to the Government, except from fear of punishment. As a result, the Government's rice stocks have been insufficient even for an effective system of what is called modified rationing. On top of this the Government tried to enforce statutory prices in the open market where people were ready to buy rice at more than double these prices. Not unnaturally, the farmers, big and small, withheld their stocks.... Some clandestine purchases have always been possible in the districts, but the Government thwarted this by stopping any movement of rice. The ostensible excuse was the system of cordoning the surplus areas, but in practice the police prevented people from carrying even small quantities of rice for domestic consumption from one place to another, often from one village to the next.... In most cases what the people said they had been doing (it seemed most improbable that they were engaged in anything more heinous or subversive) was to carry a few kilograms of rice, bought with great difficulty and at crippling prices, to feed famished families.

"A still more serious complaint is about police graft. Many villagers have told our reporters that they could sell rice in the open market or carry it from one village to another only by bribing the police. They were particularly bitter in recalling that, while they were often harassed for their inability to please the police, truckloads of rice were allowed to pass through food cordons, presumably because some people were able to pay as much as the police wanted"....

From about the middle of February the extreme left opposition began to push up the temperature, the moderate left and



other opposition parties adding to the effort their suicidal support. Disorders in the legislature, not an unfamiliar occurrence, were given shocking intensity: the formal opening of the budget session of the Assembly on February 16 was reduced to tatters, the Governor was not allowed to read her inaugural address because of the Government's "complete failure", as the Opposition alleged, "to check the rising prices of food and other daily necessities and its refusal to release political prisoners arrested under the Defence of India Rules". Next week, when the Finance Minister tried to present the budget, his papers were snatched from his hands, torn up and scattered; by the end of the month the functioning of the legislature was made utterly impossible.

Parallel developments were concerted in the districts, where the mistakes of the Government were matched by the cunning opportunism of the Communists. In mid-February, an angry crowd clashed with the police in the 24-Parganas district, which used to be a Communist stronghold but was captured by the Congress in 1962. The next day sporadic clashes broke out all over the district and one student was killed by a police bullet. This is a never-failing signal for worse to follow, and it did. Crowds of students, with a liberal sprinkling of whole-time rowdies who are always at hand, rioted in the streets of Calcutta bringing education to a halt for several days.

Back in the districts, and in the third week of February, mob attacks began to occur on food offices of the administration, aided and abetted by the agents of the bigger cultivators. But once they started they did not stop there. The nerve centres of the social organism were raided. In the town of Krishnagar alone "the demonstrators set fire to the railway station, banks, public buildings, the house of a Minister and many other public and private houses. Twenty-two Government offices were set alight in two days. In the early hours of the same day, railway stations at Payradanga, Madanpur, Birati and other places, mostly in the 24-Parganas, were stormed and set fire to. Railway coaches were burnt, fish-plates removed, barricades put up on the national highway leading to Krishnagar and telephone and telegraph wires tampered with, apparently to isolate the town from the adjoining areas. "Disorder continued though on a reduced scale until the storm, unprecedented in speed

and ferocity, broke on March 10, 'Bengal Bandh' (total strike) day, and completely paralysed life in Calcutta and wide areas around it and swept the civil administration off its feet. Within two hours in the morning from 9.30 to 11.30—the coincidence is marked—there were dozens of cases of wanton destruction of railway and Government property and mob-police clashes, furious crowds striking hard at any effort to maintain normal activities....

"Imagination was fed by calculatedly circulated rumours of large-scale preparations for arson, sabotage and reprisals." Coupled with this was the isolation of the administrative machinery in the district areas from all sections of the local people who, either by choice or under the compulsion of circumstances created by demonstrators, sided actively with the resisters or maintained a none-of-my-business attitude.... A sense of helplessness seemed to have overtaken policy-makers as well as executives in the Government. A spirit of surrender to the inevitable was evident as much among the men in authority as among the general public.... While the general run of demonstrators engaged the police in pitched battles, select groups did the work of arsonists and saboteurs. Almost without exception the police, outnumbered by furious mobs, made only a show of resistance, firing only when their own security was threatened. In no case were the mobs chased away before they had seen their plans through. In a large number of cases the police accepted defeat before they were fully extended. The Army was called in virtually all over the disturbed area. Troops moved in under persistent demands from the civil authorities who seemed haunted by the fear that a moment's delay would bring about the collapse of the administration".

The nature of the organization behind the rioting was clearly brought out by one single instance in one small town, hardly more than a village, where a crowd of 10,000 attacked the railway station and other centres. "The small crowd of arsonists here was more marked by their deliberateness, deftness, determination in purpose and above all the neat organization with which they practised incendiarism. Unless a special quality fuel was used, the eighteen coaches of the Barauni Express could not have been consumed so quickly by the fire, with

flames rising up to twenty feet. It was obvious that a premeditated plan worked, an organized small group was in operation and the group had men who had the necessary training in the work allotted to them". On the map the uprising—it could be called that—looked even worse than on the ground: the attacks on railway stations were so planned that most of West Bengal's rail links with the rest of India were cut; food trains on their way to West Bengal had to be diverted to other State capitals, making this inflammable State still more so. The Communists were proved completely right in their analysis that "some incendiarism would be a guide to action, counter-measures by the police and the army would step up the tempo of popular response and thus transform mass action from sporadic outbursts of anger to organized working-class revolutionary activity".

After that many areas of West Bengal continued to smoulder, including districts, which had always been strongholds of the Congress. In one of them, Midnapur,<sup>1</sup> there were cases of mobs attacking rice mills and markets, seizing rice in transit along the main road passing through the district, which at the end of May was reported to have become wholly unsafe for food traffic. In another district a crowd of more than 300 women led by a woman worker of the Left Communist Party attacked a group of food administration officials who had gone to the village to realize rice levies. *The Statesman* report of the incident said: "The procurement party's leader, an inspector of the Food Department, suffered the main brunt of the attack. The others, an Assistant Livestock Officer and a peon, escaped through a rear door. They ran to the Block Development Officer, who immediately came to the scene only to be surrounded by the violent women. They ordered him out of the place under threat of 'dire consequences'."

Two intense spasms of violence occurred in the last few days of October and the first few of November last year. Their causes were superficially dissimilar but beneath the surface were

<sup>1</sup>During the "Quit India" movement in 1942, a "rebel government" was set up in this district by a Congress leader, Ajoy Mukherjee, who was to quit the Congress in 1967, defeat the State Chief Minister, and set up a United Front Government in partnership with the Communists

nourished by a common source: the continued turbulence in the minds of people, which the Government has lost all capacity to influence. The two eruptions brought to a burning focus two of the most dangerous trends in recent Indian politics: the power of sudden distemper among the people, no matter what the provocation for illegitimate conduct might be; and the ability of all politically motivated people to heat up any situation to their advantage so long as they do not mind giving it a lawless turn. In one case, Hindi fanaticism and a kind of fierce orthodoxy were collared by the Jana Sangh to demonstrate the strength of the militant right and to give such a warning to the Congress, to the Central Government and to the extremists on the left that none of the three should be able to ignore it. In the other, regional loyalty was worked up to the pitch of street fighting over a relatively unimportant issue, the location of a steel plant. These are the second and third of the three manifestations which I mentioned earlier<sup>1</sup> of the uncertainty overhanging India's future.

The Hindi heartland of northern India, which includes the States of Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, U.P. and most of Bihar and the Union Territory of Delhi, has always been the territorial core of the ethos of Hindu India. Since the coming of independence, it has also been the recruiting ground of the Jana Sangh and a potential power base which the party has developed very rapidly—how rapidly may be seen in the steep rise in its election successes in this region, but how ominously may be seen in certain other facts which are much darker. Beneath the surface of normal politics, hints have always glittered in this region that a determined and efficient organization is being built up by the Jana Sangh which can do much more than look after the party's election campaigns once every five years. In August, 1965, and for the first time since the partition riots, that organizing capacity stood boldly, or rather proudly, above the surface: protesting against Shastri's refusal to attack Pakistan over the Kutch dispute, the Jana Sangh organized a spectacular demonstration in front of Parliament House in New Delhi which was completely orderly and peaceful but with outriders, banners, detachments and squads,

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 364-65.

throbbed with disciplined power. In the September War in 1965 the Jana Sangh gave a quieter but not less clear hint of what it could do. Those who saw it and understood its meaning were chilled. When the city police force was withdrawn from New Delhi to cope with a suspected Pakistani paradrop nearby, the Union Home Minister asked for volunteers one evening to look after some of the city services. Next morning hundreds of Jana Sangh volunteers, uniformed and disciplined, punctually reported at the appointed places, and ran the services as though they had done nothing else in their lives. This strengthened their already well-known image of being a strong, unified party, committed to making India a strong and unified country.

In November last year a hint of another kind—more a scream than a hint, both ugly and strong—came from another part of the hinterland of Jana Sangh politics, a wild demonstration by a howling and yelling mob of Sadhus, naked to their genitals and wielding spears and tridents. From July onwards, some Sadhus had been demonstrating in New Delhi by fasting in batches outside the houses of senior members of the Government, demanding a total ban on cow slaughter throughout India instead of the partial ban now in force in most States. In August and September, the demand was given disorderly expression in the Lok Sabha by an over-enthusiastic member. In October clashes occurred in Maharashtra between Hindus and Muslims, the latter insisting on their right to slaughter cows for food or profit, which led to police firing and the death of 11 persons. But the ugliest incident happened on November 7 in New Delhi.

On that day, a crowd estimated at a few hundred thousand, organized by a committee which had the support of the Jana Sangh to some extent but the enthusiastic support of some of the lesser parties of extremist Hindu opinion, stormed down the main road which leads to Parliament House, and on the way broke through police cordons, upturned and burnt motor cars, attacked Broadcasting House and the offices of the Union Government's main information organization and the country's main newsagency. They invaded and tried to burn the house of the Congress President, Mr. Kamaraj, who had to flee through the back door. At Broadcasting House the mob killed

a policeman who had tried to stop it. The city did not start returning to normal until riot troops were called out. The Union Home Minister, G. L. Nanda had to resign, both because he was President of an organization of Sadhus and because his portfolio included responsibility for peace in the capital, which he had again failed to safeguard. A suggestion was seriously considered by some senior members of the Cabinet that the whole Government should resign; it had certainly showed itself so completely out of touch with what was brewing that it was neither able to anticipate the trouble nor to cope with it once the storm broke.

It is probable that many among the younger generation of Jana Sangh leaders were unhappy over the behaviour of the Sadhus; it only helped to recast the image of the Jana Sangh in the mould which it has been trying to break. But it did demonstrate that while the Jana Sangh can appeal to the urban middle classes with its present-day image, it can stir the depths of northern India's rural Hindus with the passion of religion. In the areas where it is strong, it can harness both forces for any task in hand: for fighting elections or for making a bid for power in the politics of street fighting. Who would win if the political battle broke out into illegitimate forms is not the point here. Conditions approximating to civil war would probably prevail, with the extreme right and left as the main belligerents. Their opposition to each other is so deadly, much more so than either's to the Congress, that if either raised a rebellious head the other would too. The clash between them may ruin both. But it could take a heavy toll of India's unity and stability. The Communists have also shown, as in the disturbances in West Bengal, that they too are equipped to stage a civil rebellion. They do not have the Jana Sangh's advantage of being able to control a large, consolidated and strategic area in the central land mass of the country. But they have the countervailing advantage that the areas where they are strong, such as Kerala and West Bengal and to some extent Andhra, are all on the periphery and accessible to external sources of assistance. This is one of the possible dangers to India in the unrest which has been stirring East Pakistan, allegedly under leftist inspiration, since the beginning of 1966. The bitterness of the conflict would be aided by what was

earlier discussed as an asset for India's unity, the ambition of all-India parties to keep India united so that they may capture it whole. But the effect would be to disrupt unity also.

The second major spasm of violence at the start of the last winter occurred in Andhra, over the location of a steel plant. Riots of this kind are not unknown in India—India is no stranger to any kind of rioting—and there had been some earlier over the location, for example, of an oil refinery in Assam. Nor is it surprising that even fifteen years after the formation of Andhra the specific loyalty of a man of Andhra to his State has not disappeared in catharsis. The sentiment of regional loyalty, though weaker than it used to be, is still quite strong and comes to the boil whenever some issue provokes it. In a dispute over a mixed-language strip of territory between Marathi-speaking Maharashtra and Kannada-speaking Mysore (both States claim the strip) a train was sent off the rails and twenty-two persons killed in June last year. In its final spurt, the demand for a Punjabi-speaking State saw the burning alive of three men in a shop which they had refused to close on demand by one party; this happened in the largely Hindu town of Panipat. At the seat of Sikh politics, Amritsar, the Akali Dal was able to mount its most dramatic campaign of coercion, with Sant Fateh Singh and five others threatening to burn themselves in public view if the Government of India did not capitulate, though the issue now was only the minor and residual one of the future of Chandigarh after the new Punjabi-speaking State had been carved out. But what made the events in Andhra surprising was the virulence and the suddenness of the outburst. Major trains passing through the area were held up for a week, post offices and an ammunition store were looted, a naval dockyard was imperilled, nine people were killed in police firing in a single town but the total toll was probably much heavier because mobs estimated at a few thousand each had roamed through some towns for a few days.

What these examples of mob violence show, as do several others which were narrated earlier, is that neither the Government's machinery nor the Congress party's has its ear sufficiently close to the ground to appreciate in time what trouble is being cooked up and to anticipate it by countervailing politi-

cal action among the people. All that either of them can do is to call in the police force or the army in maximum strength and to put down the trouble by main force. It is not that the political leadership is unable to do what it should or that it does not get a sufficient response from the people when it does what it should. When it was faced with yet another ominous agitation over cow slaughter last December, it decided to draw the issue into public debate and succeeded in deflating the sources of support for the agitation. To some extent it did the same thing over Sant Fateh Singh's threat to burn himself up. But most of the time the leadership lives in such a state of aloofness from the people—or in such a state of panic when trouble breaks out—that it does not know what may be stirring beneath the surface and is unable to act in the appropriate way and in time. Thereby it breeds a state of chronic instability in which almost anything can happen, ranging from the collapse of the whole structure under the weight of unmotivated but perpetual disorder, to a state of civil war as the ambitions of major all-India parties collide, or the revival of secessionism in worse forms than India has known in the past. In such circumstances people's thoughts may turn to a possible rescue by the army, thus removing one of the inhibitions—the popular dislike of a non-participative, non-political, authoritarian rule—which has so far helped to keep soldierly ambitions in check. At best the rescue would be accomplished, in which case the country would remain more or less united but democracy would be buried beneath army boots. At worst, unity would also be lost, and this would be the more likely outcome, considering the limitations of a composite army in a country of the size and variety of India.

### THE TENTATIVE AFFIRMATIVE

If all this is justifiable speculation about what may seep into the body of Indian politics through the cracks being made in it by the manifestations of illegitimacy, it follows that the foremost problem for India now is how to close these cracks, which in turn means how the alienation between the rulers and the ruled may be ended. Twenty-five pages back this gap was seen to be the great opening which many forms of illegiti-



macy had begun to exploit. The question now is whether and how this opening can be shut, how the Government, the administration and the party in power may be integrated with the people below. It does not matter whether the Government is of the right or left, but it matters immensely that its top and bottom should be an integrated whole, that at least from those who have voted it, it should be able to get vigilant support until they decide to vote for some other party. From the rest it should at least be able to expect the normal behaviour of orderly citizens. The size of the umbrella it holds over the country does not matter, and it certainly does not matter if the umbrella is a great deal smaller than the Congress provided when it was at its height. Given sufficient integration between the Government and its backers, a party or a coalition with a much smaller legislative majority can administer the country more efficiently and with greater ability than the Congress has been able to for the best part of the last decade in spite of the enormous majority it had, until this year, in Parliament and nearly all State Legislatures.

The first condition for the remaking of this integration is the precise obverse of that which has eroded it over the years. The survival of the Government must not depend, as of the Congress governments has depended ever since the party lost its emotional appeal with the people, upon the skill and finesse which the party in power may have in top-level manoeuvring or in the game of making and breaking factions. If it does, the party will inevitably forget, as the Congress has, that its principal business is to provide an effective government for the people, not to get so lost in faction's web that it forgets to govern; it will inevitably so dilute its policies and programmes for the sake of weaving a majority out of entirely disparate elements that its ranks and its government will lose all strength of conviction, and any consensus that may survive among its leaders would be so diffuse and feeble as to be of no value at all. Its contact with the people, as distinct from factions, will also become so loose that it will be forced to choose administrative fiats as the instruments of its policy, not public cooperation. On the other hand if the party has to survive on the strength of its policies and the support they evoke among the people or on the strength of the image of its

intentions and character, it will try to look to these; it will be forced to keep a closer watch on shifts in the people's needs and preferences and on its own standing among them than on the intrigues of groups and factions.

Since a consensus cannot be simultaneously comprehensive and strong, it follows that a party will become smaller as its policies become more precise until it breaks up into ideological splinters. This too has happened in India quite often, especially in the politics of the left. If it happens too often, as it has in the case of some leftist parties in West Bengal, it can destroy a party's ability to rule the country as surely and even more rapidly than the ideological flabbiness which is the main sickness of the Congress. But corresponding to what might be the overriding needs of the country, there is an intermediate point at which a party can make the best available compromise between the precision of its policies and the inconclusiveness of the ideological consensus within it; from the latter it can acquire the size it needs to become and remain the ruling party, from the former the senses of purpose and direction without which no Government can be effective.

In times of war, with the single objective of national survival before them, all parties may join in a national coalition without depriving the Government of cohesiveness and coherence. But this may not be possible when the parties have before them the more multifarious tasks of peace, especially of removing such dire poverty as is in India today, because although there may be many roads to prosperity the surest way to flounder is to try to tread all of them at the same time. Choice becomes necessary, and with it the pain of choosing. The depth of consensus becomes more important than its width, though it has to be broad enough to give the party in power a stable legislative majority either on its own strength or in alliance with some like-minded parties.

It is a measure of the political and economic progress India has made in the more essential tasks of survival that whereas formerly she needed the consensus to be more broad than deep—hence the suitability of Nehru's Congress, a "Congress of Parties" as it was described earlier, to the Indian situation during the first decade of freedom—she now needs a party whose policies are clearer even if that means that the base of the

support for it or acquiescence in its rule is somewhat narrower. The present situation also requires that the needs and preferences of the people at the bottom, and any oscillations in them, should travel up to the top more effectively and faster than they do through the present-day Congress and administration, and that they should do so through legitimate channels, not violence in the streets.

This means that India needs a clearer party system than she has had so far, one in which the electorate has clearly viable alternative choices, in which each main party or combination is distinct from the others, and each party is, within itself, a well-integrated whole from top to bottom. When she has such a party system, certain consequences may very promptly follow: *any* government, whatever its ideological point of view, would be more conscious than the Congress has been of the need to provide clean, efficient and responsive administration, since no ideologies are involved in this imperative but the continuance of popular support depends upon it; secondly, whether the government is formed by a single party or an alliance, it would *have to* reflect the majority opinion at the bottom, not a minority opinion as the Congress has reflected so far, because otherwise some other party or alliance would take its place; since the chance to form or topple the government by *legitimate means* would be available to any party, which has the necessary strength by itself or in combination with others, the swing towards illegitimacy would be put in reverse. The speed of the reversal is difficult to foresee. But it can be as fast as the first two factors would warrant. Therefore the final question which India needs to answer today is whether such a party system is available today; or at least whether there is a sufficient assurance now that it will become available before too late.

I think the answer is a tentative affirmative, and I have used both words with care—affirmative and tentative. Affirmative because certain tendencies, dimly visible in the first three elections and discussed on earlier pages, have been given a shot in the arm by the fourth General Election; they might force the Congress to thin down and other parties to grow, thus helping to evolve a balanced party system. Tentative because the rot may have set in too deep already; persistent misdeeds

of the Congress leadership may have set up an irreversible trend towards the dissolution of the Congress and, with it, of the party system as a whole.

A characteristic of the earlier elections was that in terms of the electoral vote India had all the disadvantages of an accentuated multi-party system, with no single party able to get a clear majority of the vote, while in terms of the legislatures she had all the disadvantages of being virtually a one-party system. This was bad enough for her political viability. The fourth elections have thrown up what at first sight appears to be worse: the opposition parties have become strong enough to make a bid for throwing the Congress out of office, and in more than half the States they have, but in most of the States and certainly at the Centre they are not strong enough to form durable governments themselves; the result may be a prolonged period of instability and ineffective governments, and nothing is more likely to put an end to democracy, if not also to the survival of India as a country.

In fact, however, this outcome may well be the double shock that India needed: for the Congress to realise what dangers confront it if it does not improve, for the opposition parties to realise that vast opportunities await them if they rescue democracy from the clutches of illegitimacy and improve their own strength by discouraging, instead of encouraging as they have done so far, fragmentation of their respective forces. The prospect of total defeat may have a therapeutic effect upon the Congress; so might the prospect of capturing power by legitimate means have upon other parties.

How much and how soon will political parties learn from the Fourth General Election? Nearly all major parties now have a taste of power in their mouths, many of them for the first time; but in their heads buzz the problems of exercising it in the midst of the tensions of an underdeveloped society and the conflicts of a federation which has changed overnight from a single-party to a multi-party structure. What will this dual experience do to their thinking and behaviour? This is the most important of all questions that surround India today. The answer to it will decide whether India will descend into total confusion and disintegration, or will get over the present uncertainties and become a more truly stable system than ever

before, in which changes reflect the surge of vigour, not drift and bungling. And the answer depends upon the balance between the dead weight of old habits and the pressure of more recent events.

The force of habit was at work, almost invariably with very destructive results, in the selection of its candidates for the fourth elections by the Congress. All the State branches of the party did their selections in the light of the completely outdated experience of the previous elections. They assumed that, as in the past, getting the Congress nomination was more than half the battle; the favours of the ballot-box would automatically follow. Sensing that the civil war between factions would become more intense, not less, as the influence of the central leadership of the party declined, the dominant faction in each State party concentrated more on eliminating the candidates of the opposing faction than on choosing those most likely to win the election. When these selections went up to the Central Election Committee of the Congress for final decisions, the awards again depended less upon who would be most likely to win than upon who would support whom in choosing the Prime Minister. The central leadership promptly retreated from the criterion about which much had been heard before the elections, namely whether the candidate would project the image of the Congress as a youthful, progressive modern-minded party, able to carry the country into the twentieth century.

This single-minded devotion to post-election battles within the party led to the loss of many election-time battles with the opposition parties. In the first place, large blocks of the disgruntled left the party in disgust. At least in five States—West Bengal, Orissa, Kerala, Punjab and Rajasthan—the Congress failed to capture power because of the opposition of its own splinters; for the same reason, it failed to hold power in three more States, Haryana, Bihar and U.P., where it had formed the government. In parliamentary elections also the Congress paid heavily for these follies: the percentage of losses was higher where it fielded the same old faces than where it made a bold departure. Worse, many of the splinters that broke away not only took away many votes but also some leaders of fine repute, upright people who had refused to bow to the local

party bosses; this had a disastrous effect upon the reputation of the party as a whole.

Since the elections, the Congress has continued to show the same old avarice for power, the same unscrupulousness for capturing it by fair means or foul. In total disregard of what it and they stood for, it tried to win over unattached, non-party legislators by various methods. At least in one State, Rajasthan, the Governor, a former Congress leader, used questionable criteria for keeping a non-Congress alliance out of office and the Congress party in; when that manoeuvre failed, the Union Cabinet, meeting for the first time after the elections, decided to suspend the Rajasthan Assembly and to put the State under President's rule for the time being. In the autumn of this year the Congress tried a devious and, what is worse, unsuccessful<sup>1</sup> manoeuvre to pull down the United Front Government in West Bengal which did not enhance the reputation of the Union Government for fairness towards non-Congress governments in the States.

The force of old habits also asserted itself in the choice of Mrs. Gandhi as Prime Minister and of Mr. Morarji Desai as the Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister. It was not determined by the suitability of either candidate for the office concerned; nor was thought given to the disharmony which such mismatching would cause in the Cabinet. The decision was made by the interplay of group rivalries. In the choice of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha, and later of the President and Vice-President of the Republic, Mrs. Gandhi behaved as though the Congress still reigned supreme and could continue to disregard the wishes of the Opposition parties. She overlooked the fact, as her father did in choosing most of the State Governors, that these offices are the props of the constitutional structure; they are not meant to be rewards for party men.

The behaviour of some of the opposition parties has not been much better; nor has it been more free of the force of habit. The right and left wings of the Communist parties remain at loggerheads, intent to fight each other to the death. The two

<sup>1</sup> A more serious and still more questionable manoeuvre involving the special powers of the Governor, was more successful later; the U.F. Government was dismissed on November 21.



It's disgusting—the way he tries to win popularity all the time—he's again criticising Government policies!



Come on, don't take this defeat so seriously—they succeeded purely due to the support of the people, nothing else ...



wings of the socialist movement, the PSP and the Socialist Party of the Lohia brand, talk constantly about uniting again but rarely do anything about it. The Swatantra party remains a pyramid which looks impressive at first sight but on closer examination still shows itself to be without a base, however glittering its apex; the Jana Sangh remains the exact opposite of this, a base without an apex, and even the base, however well-grounded in the strongholds of Hindi and orthodoxy in northern India, continues to be unable to extend itself into the non-Hindi speaking areas and its cadres remain resistant to the modernising touch.

But these are the comings and goings of the old brand of politicians, who are fixed in patterns of behaviour from which they find it hard to escape. Far healthier trends in Indian politics can be seen if the gaze is shifted to the more deep-seated forces, which are also much larger than a generation or two of politicians, and much more likely to shape the country's future in the long run. More particularly one should see the functioning of Indian democracy in the latest elections, the effectiveness of the shifts in popular preference, and the pressure of the resulting events.

Even those who were left unconvinced by the first three elections have little reason to doubt now that the Indian voter votes with discrimination and without fear, that his interest in the democratic process is rising, not falling, and that the influence of the local factor upon him, especially of caste, though still strong, is also falling. Nothing else can explain a series of interconnected facts. One, even at a time when the behaviour of many opposition parties was undemocratic and unpraiseworthy, and of the Congress such that it should have made most people cynical about the whole political process, the voter turn-out (even excluding votes which were cast but were found to be invalid) was remarkably high, just over one per cent short of the turn-out in the U.S. Presidential election of 1964, and that in spite of the greater risk of violence at the polling booths this time. Two, a large number of the "strong men" of the Congress party and government, especially those who were notorious for unscrupulous arm-twisting or for suborning and misusing the machinery of the party and the government, were decisively humbled; the voter seems not to have feared their

power, or the power of their influential agents in the village; in fact, the so-called strong men suffered proportionately more defeats than lesser leaders. Three, over large areas of the country, over whole States and regions, the results showed a definite swing of opinion one way or another, in favour of one party or another, not the kind of fragmentation which would have resulted if the dominant influence on the elections had not been the strength of one political party or another but such factors (which all parties and candidates try to use, thus cancelling out each other's advantage) as the caste or religious affinities between the candidate and constituency, or the last-minute ripples of a local incident. Four, the voter was relatively indifferent this time to eleventh-hour campaigning by the parties; most places did not wear the eve-of-elections look they used to wear in previous elections, meetings and processions were not very well attended if their purpose was only to parade the colours of a party instead of espousing some popular economic or other grievance; in their despair many party campaigners confessed that the voter seemed to have made up his mind independently of them.

Still more important is the fact, or at least the surmise, that these particular features of the fourth elections are not a flash in the pan. As was suggested on an earlier page, the Congress could remain invincible only so long as it appeared to be so: as long as it seemed to be pointless to vote against the Congress because it would win anyhow, it could get the vote of those who like to remain on the winning side whether they like that side or not; correspondingly, opposition parties continued to be denied the vote of those who did not wish to waste their vote on the losing candidate; but once other parties showed that they too could be in power (as they are in many States now) their chances of remaining in power would improve. The fourth elections made it clear all over the country that wherever there was a party or alliance—whether of the right or left seems to have mattered very little—which appeared to the voter to be a likely alternative as he swung away from the Congress, it was able to prevent the return of the Congress to power. This ability will now grow, because the legend of the invincibility of the Congress has ended.

It will also grow because of the complex effects of social

change upon political preference. The fourth elections have reinforced and demonstrated as valid the view expressed earlier that the hold of the Congress is stronger in areas which have been relatively little exposed to change than in areas where currents of either political or economic change have flowed relatively fast. To be sure there are exceptions: in spite of being backward and unexposed, Orissa, Bihar and U.P. (largely because the Congress is more weakened in these three States than in any others by internal dissensions) have passed out of Congress hands, and Rajasthan (because of the alliance in this feudal State between the rightist parties and the princes and landed interests) nearly did so<sup>\*</sup>; Maharashtra remains a stronghold of the Congress despite the rising level of economic and political activity. But truer to the rule are States like Madhya Pradesh (unexposed and strongly pro-Congress), West Bengal and Kerala (where political activity is intense and non-Congress parties strong). The reasons behind this rule find their clearest expression in Madras, where political and economic changes are throwing up new forces, new classes of people in search of identity which the Congress, being slower on its feet, is unable to capture; this creates a vacuum which other forces are now able to exploit with vigour.

The lessons of the fourth elections for the Congress are quite obvious. The countrywide decline in the popular support for it is by no means disastrous. In the Lok Sabha elections it has declined only from 44.7% in 1962 (47.7 in 1957) to 41.0% in 1967; in State assembly elections from 43.6% in 1962 (44.9 in 1957) to 40.1% in 1967. It is true, as suggested earlier that once the decline begins it may gather momentum unless something is seriously done to arrest the trend. But a sufficient basis for recovery still exists in most parts of the country, especially in States where significant sections of the party broke away from it only recently. Of course the Congress will never resume its position of invincibility. But there is no reason why it should continue to look as battered as it does today. The second lesson is that the Congress must never again be content only with the

<sup>\*</sup> In U.P. the Congress won a foothold on power but lost it through defections; in Rajasthan it did not win the elections but scrambled back to power through defections from some Opposition parties before they could unite sufficiently to form the Government.

election strategy they pushed the Congress out of power.

This pattern of events has two major implications for non-Congress parties. The time is not yet when any of them can be sure of defeating the Congress single-handed. The DMK has done it in Madras. But elsewhere Opposition parties have been able to capture power only by forming pre-election or (more often) post-election alliances and united fronts. Therefore for some years to come they have to adjust themselves to two facts. One, they *can* capture power by legitimate and peaceful means ; the politics of street fighting, end product of political frustration, is no longer necessary for them. Two, in order to capture power with the assistance of other parties, each party must curb the extremism of its own views and learn to adjust its policies to those of its allies.

A question of obvious importance is whether the Congress and the parties opposed to it will learn the lessons written out for them by the results of the Fourth General Elections. The post-election record suggests that the chances are rather better that they will than that they will not.

Take the non-Congress parties first. They have been far more successful in resisting attempts by the Congress to seduce their members than the Congress has been in resisting theirs ; such weaknesses as various united fronts have shown have resulted from internal dissensions. In the three biggest States of northern India—U.P., Bihar and Madhya Pradesh—which for four or five decades have constituted the heartland of Congress politics, one Congress Ministry has fallen after another, yielding place to united front governments formed by non-Congress parties. On the other hand, desperate attempts by the Congress to bring down united front governments have been disastrous failures and in some States, especially West Bengal, have tarnished the Congress image still further. This suggests greater cohesiveness, co-ordination and skilful flexibility in united fronts than should have been expected of alliances formed by such disparate elements.

Secondly, many non-Congress parties have shown quite unexpected willingness to modify their policies to suit each other's or at least to scale down insistence upon them. Before the elections anyone would have thought that of all the political parties in the country the two most dissimilar and antagonistic, and therefore most unlikely to cooperate with each other after

the elections were the Akali Dal and the Jana Sangh. Yet between them they are running one of the most stable and probably the most effective of the united front governments in the country. They have muted their differences on the two issues which had divided them most, the status of the Punjabi language and the future of Chandigarh. There is a direct clash between the economic interests of what are, respectively, their main constituencies—the farmers, most of them Sikhs and the key base of the Akali Dal, and the urban merchant class, mostly Hindu, who are the main financiers of the Jana Sangh. Yet the one area in which one would expect the clash to be most intense, in the production and merchandising of food, they have evolved and are successfully carrying out a policy which is proving beneficial to the State as a whole. This rubbing off of differences is occurring elsewhere also.

Another striking example of change is to be seen in Bihar. What was the most anarchistic of all parties before the elections, the SSP, has become in that State a pillar of support for law and order. It is the dominant partner in the united front government there, and though still working for the transformation of society—as it should; Bihar's society is one of the most archaic in India—it insists upon legitimacy and respect for the law. It makes no concession to those who try to perpetrate lawlessness however revolutionary they may claim to be. In Kerala the Left CPI leader and Chief Minister, Namboodiripad, is now outspokenly critical of lawless behaviour by students or labour unions and unhesitatingly uses the more conventional methods of dealing with it despite the harm it may do to his standing with the ultra radicals of his party; in fact, he has come into open clash with some of Kerala's CP (M) leaders, and extremist students have been burning his effigies.

*The most interesting example of the change wrought in revolutionaries by the burdens of responsibility is to be seen in West Bengal, though the change has not gone very far there yet. The Government of this State more than any other is caught up in the backwash of the tactics of disorder deliberately followed up to the eve of the elections by the Communists, more particularly by the CPI (M). Perhaps because they did not expect to be in power so soon, Communist leaders were the most uninhibited, next only to the SSP's, in preaching and practising*

violence against authority. This has exposed them to three different kinds of embarrassment, each very severe, since they became a part of the government themselves. In the first place, the extremists in their own ranks are subjecting their government to the same acute harassment by disorder to which they had earlier subjected the Congress Government. When they trot out the same arguments on behalf of law and order as the Congress did, they are denounced as bourgeois revisionists in the same language as they used against the Right CPI. Secondly, some even among those of their followers who are not committed to a particularly extremist ideology are now unable to change habits of violence cultivated over a period of time; that they have their own government now seems to encourage instead of dissuading them to take law into their own hands; they are going through the same difficulties of adjustment, only in a more acute form, as Congress men did twenty years ago. Thirdly, because politically motivated violence is being allowed such rein, habitual or professional hooligans have also joined in and are having the time of their lives. All three of these elements were very definitely present in the rather serious disorders seen in the middle of this year in some of the rural areas of North Bengal, especially in Naxalbari, and in the industrial belt around Calcutta. But those among the party's leaders who are in the government and exposed to responsibility are gradually moving, far too gradually for the government's reputation for effectiveness but nevertheless perceptibly, towards ways which are indispensable for the functioning of government.

Since a democratic government has to be gradual in moving against what has all the appearance of being the result of popularly shared grievance, and since many parties drag their feet when circumstances compel them to go against the grain of what they have vehemently proclaimed to be their policies, the West Bengal government has been slow in moving against the lawlessness let loose by so-called "mass movements". It was slow in curbing the near-insurrection by the peasants in Naxalbari and slower still in curbing the cruelties perpetrated by the more militant trade unions against industrial employers and managements. But ultimately it did act in most cases, sometimes out of the conviction that it must, as in the case of Naxal-

bari, where questions of party discipline were also involved, sometimes because action was enjoined upon it by judicial pronouncements, as in cases of illegal confinement of managerial staff by unruly workers. But even its CPI (M) ministers have not been able to ignore their obligations as ministers in the long run.

There is much less evidence to show that the Congress is learning its lessons too; it is certainly not learning them as well or as fast as some of the non-Congress parties. Perhaps because it is more strongly bound by the force of habit, it has been unfair in its dealings with the non-Congress parties in Rajasthan and more recently in West Bengal. But its record in respect of most of the non-Congress governments is reasonably good, and it was good to see how, after the rebuff it received in Rajasthan it mended its ways in Punjab. Except for its miserable mistake in West Bengal, the central leadership of the Congress has not allowed the existence of a non-Congress government in any State to complicate the Union Government's relations with it. But what is more important is that the Congress remains amenable—more than any other party except the PSP and perhaps the Swatantra Party—to the rules of non-violent, legitimate and democratic politics even though it was the Congress which, by neglecting many of its important functions in the past, created the opportunity for the politics of disorder. It rarely indulges in disorders itself, and rarely tries to lock up the arena of legitimate politics. In that it remains true to its character as the party which organized four of the biggest democratic elections the world has seen.

If Indian politics should remain in this arena, there will be reason to hope that the rhythm of normal evolution will be restored to India, and with its principal vehicle, a healthy party system, working on sound democratic lines. As the non-Congress forces grow, they will develop a clearer differentiation between their leftist and rightist wings. Then the possibility suggested earlier will open up a little further—of distinctive but democratic forces being arrayed against the Congress, (not *the all-inclusive and therefore indefinable united fronts which rule some states today*), each pressing in upon it in a more definite manner and forcing upon it a shape which would be ideologically more distinct and recognizable. This con-

frontation, so long as it remains democratic, will give the actions and policies of each major party and the government formed by it that sense of direction and purpose without which it has not been possible for India even to discover, let alone, implement adequate plans for coping with her economic problems.

Chances are better than even that the confrontation will remain democratic or where it has ceased to be will become so again. Parties, like individuals, are not incapable of learning from experience though they may not have, and certainly the Congress does not have, the sense to anticipate misfortune instead of learning from it only after it has delivered the blow. And for most non-Congress parties the 1967 elections were their first proof that the democratic road to power is not an illusion or a bourgeoisie myth; for the Congress they were the first convincing demonstration of the truth that excessive pre-occupation with a vague, indefinable and comprehensive unity for its own sake, without regard for policies and performance, is a sure invitation to the loss of policies, and ultimately loss of unity as well. If both sides learn their respective lessons from the fourth general elections, Indian society may regain some of that will to do better and the government that linkage between the top and the bottom which is more important for national recovery than the soundness of the remedies prescribed by technocrats and economic experts for individual problems, however important these might be in their own right.



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